

SOCIETY'S HIDDEN WOUND

# *Wastefulness*

Osman Nuri TOPBAŞ







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## FOREWORD

*Endless praise and thanks be to the Lord of the Universe, Allah, glorified and exalted be He, the sole Owner of the heavens and the earth.*

*Endless salutations and blessings be upon the beloved of Allah, the light of creation, the Prophet of Mercy sent until the end of time, Muhammad Mustafa, and upon his pure and noble household and upon his distinguished Companions.*

Unfortunately, in today's world, weak societies have been exploited and powerful societies dragged into frenzies of waste through capitalist, materialist and secular thought and ideology. The insensitive laughter of powerful societies is fed with the sweat and tears of the weak.

As humanity moves away from the Divine truths, it takes leave of conscience, compassion and wisdom, altruism and sacrifice, in short, from all the virtues and lofty qualities rendering the human being the noblest of creation. Perhaps more regrettable than this is the existence of those Muslim circles deeming themselves 'devout', and who are swept up by such currents. This segment of society, widely and infamously known for its pompousness, makes the mistake of seeking respect and status through flamboyance, waste and pretension,

remaining indifferent to the plight of the suffering, and turning a blind eye and deaf ear to their cries.

Allah Almighty, however, enjoins us in verse 100 of the Qur'anic chapter At-Taubah to be of those following in the footsteps of the **Emigrants** and the **Helpers** devoted to doing **good**. That is to say, He declares that we should hold up as an example the distinguished generation raised under the Messenger of Allah (pbuh).

We ought, then, weigh up our own worldview against the worldview of the Companions. The noble Companions lived in the consciousness that their very last stop in this world would be the grave and that the true life was the life of the Hereafter. This is why luxury, waste, gluttony and avarice comprised a way of life they did not relate to nor recognise. Despite the great hardship they faced materially, the most peaceful society was that of the Companions in the Age of Happiness. This is because they were the believers who had savoured the celestial blessings of Islam and belief, attained generosity of heart through contentment, and duly perceived the transience of the world and the permanence of the Hereafter. They rendered their second-nature such founding qualities of the Islamic morality such as contentment, resignation, altruism, patience, self-sacrifice, generosity even in poverty, as well as compassion and mercy. In this way, they attained peace in both this world and in the Hereafter.

It is a sorry state for the Muslim to blindly measure their state against those in today's society who have for-

gotten the Hereafter, in lieu of taking the **Messenger of Allah**, upon him be peace and blessings, and his noble Companions as their example. Such a state reduces the heart, which is by nature a focus of the Divine gaze, to a mere vault – so to speak – of worldly merchandise, and stifles the conscience. It prevents the believer feeling the pain and suffering of their fellow believers and performing service for the sake of Allah in complete devotion. This, in turn, implies the wastefulness of all bounties bestowed upon the human being – Islam and belief first and foremost – as well as the ruin of eternal happiness.

Wastefulness is the attempt to suppress feelings of inferiority and to present oneself to others through wealth by way of buying repute and esteem. This is the first narrow meaning of wastefulness that comes to mind. However, wastefulness signifies overstepping the bounds in every respect and transgressing the Divinely-established limits. In other words, wastefulness does not just pertain to material wealth. It is a mindset, a perspective, a spiritual condition and way of life that manifests itself as a behavioural disorder in every facet of life. In this regard, the most dangerous form of wastefulness is that which concerns the heart and spiritual life. In fact, it is clear that the myriad forms of spiritual wastefulness lie at the basis of material wastefulness.

In this humble work of ours, we have not narrowed the meaning of wastefulness to relate merely to wealth and goods, but have approached it from a broader framework. We have attempted to touch upon such

issues as wastefulness of belief, creed and worship in the first instance, followed by the wastefulness of time, knowledge, moral virtues, contemplation, the earning of a livelihood, spending in the way of Allah, in health and in eating and drinking.

These are the core domains of wastefulness. Exceeding the bounds established by Allah, no matter what the circumstances, is wastefulness. In Islam, all kinds of wealth belongs solely and absolutely to Allah. This is why it is forbidden for a servant to waste away the wealth entrusted to them for a limited time in ways that constitute misuse and miserliness. Similarly, expending the blessing of life in the wrong way, to deprive one's worship of sincerity and reverence and, in so doing, virtually hollowing these out of their fundamental purpose and essence, also amounts to a dire waste.

**May Allah Almighty accept and be well pleased with our intention and deeds, our thought and feeling. May He protect us from those states which incur His wrath and grant us success in assuming those states and deeds of righteousness with which He is pleased.**

**Amin.<sup>1</sup>**

**Osman Nuri Topbaş**

January 2017  
Üsküdar

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# Wastefulness

in Belief, Creed and Worship

The term wastefulness has a broad meaning encompassing every matter in which human beings exceed the bounds.

Accordingly, a servant's transgressing the limits set by Allah – no matter the circumstances – is also wastefulness. In other words, it is to misspend the bounty and squander it away.





## **WASTEFULNESS in Belief, Creed and Worship**

All of the bounties that our Lord has bestowed upon His servants are a sign of His mercy, love and compassion. These Divine gifts have been bestowed by Allah gratuitously, that is, without our paying a price or working to earn them. Allah Almighty declares in the Qur'an:

**“He has also made of service to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth, all is from Him. Surely in this there are signs for a people who reflect.”** (Jathiya, 45:13)

But this does not mean that these bounties can be used indiscriminately, as one desires, without condition or limitation. It is declared in another Qur'anic verse:

**“Does man think that he is to be left aimless?”**

(Qiyama, 75:36)

We are thus obligated to take into account the Divine commandments and prohibitions when using the Divinely-bestowed bounties. We must not forget that the lawful will have its account on the

Day of Reckoning, and the unlawful, its anguish and torment. Taking care to avoid overstepping the limits when consuming the lawful, and thus sliding into the sphere of **wastefulness**, is as important as avoiding the religiously unlawful. This is because wastefulness, which amounts to irreverence to the Divinely-placed measures when consuming bounties, is a great ingratitude to Allah Almighty in the face of His infinite favours and grace.

Even if the term **wastefulness** is generally used in respect to wealth and material goods, this is the narrow meaning that first comes to mind. The concept, however, has a much broader scope, encompassing every matter in which human beings exceed the bounds. Accordingly, a servant's transgressing the limits set by Allah – no matter the circumstances – is also wastefulness. In other words, it is to misspend the bounty and squander it away. *Iyas*, may Allah have mercy on him, says:

*“Everything that exceeds the bounds of the Divine commands is wastefulness.”*

Humanity is inclined to excuse their own faults, on account of their ego. Even those criminals who commit the most heinous of crimes hide behind certain excuses, seeking to justify their actions. Given the fact that even criminals are like this, squanderers and the miserly are all the more satisfied with their own condition. What is more, they cannot free themselves

of the heedlessness of supposing the waste frenzy into which they have fallen as a bliss. As a result, our first task must be to correctly fill in the meaning of the seemingly vacuous term 'wastefulness' in line with the Divine Word.

Just as Islam forbids the waste of material trusts, the reckless spending of such things of spiritual values as **belief, worship, knowledge, morality, time and intellect**, and deviations in all these, have also been forbidden. These have even been considered more serious acts of misuse and misspending. Such behaviour amounts to unmindful waste and dissipation of an eternal happiness for the sake of fickle worldly pleasures.

Our Lord has not only forbidden waste and miserliness in fulfilling such daily needs as eating and drinking, clothing and apparel, He has forbidden waste and miserliness in all matters, including those which pertain to our spiritual values, and He has commanded moderation in all these. This is why every believer is required to lead an exemplary life of balance between these two extremes. So long as they fail to comply with the Divine measures in the consumption of all bounties – material and immaterial – a person cannot be saved from falling into wastefulness or stinginess.

Some of the major types of wastefulness leading to a pitiful end both in this world and in the Hereafter,

and ways of protection from these, can be enumerated in the following way:

**a. Wastefulness of Belief:**

This is the severest form of wastefulness. The failure to preserve one's mental and spiritual dignity and allowing oneself to get carried away by falsehoods, myths, superstitions and erroneous ideas spoils the purity of the human being's primordial nature and destroys their chance of eternal happiness.

This is a spiritual calamity that weakens belief and which arises in wrongdoers generally due to a lack of restraint. Allah declares, by way of warning His servants against falling into such a state:

**“And when you see those who enter into false discourses about Our communications, withdraw from them until they enter into some other discourse, and if the Shaitan causes you to forget, then do not sit after recollection with the unjust people.”**

(Maeda, 6:68)

Friendship and an intellectual affinity with wrongdoers gradually leads to a spiritual affinity and this, in turn, weakens faith and leads to the ruin of one's eternal life. The main reasons behind the wastefulness of belief are expressed in the Qur'an as follows:

**“In gardens they will ask one another about the disbelieving criminals, “What has brought you into the pit?” They will reply: “We were not of those who prayed; “Nor did we use to feed the destitute. And we used to enter into vain discourse with those who entered into vain discourses. And we used to deny the Day of Judgment.”** (Muddaththir, 74:40-46)

Allah Almighty thus presents the path to avoiding such a predicament:

**“O you who believe! Be careful of your duty to Allah, and be with the truthful.”** (Tawba, 9:119)

In another Qur'anic verse, the need for mindful observance of the signs of Allah, that is, His commandments and prohibitions, and for attaining depth of emotion, is expressed in the following way:

**“And those who, when they are reminded of the revelations of their Lord, fall not deaf and blind thereat.”** (Furqan, 25:73)

In this respect, those who, for instance, use their spiritual faculties outside the purpose of their creation and who fail to see the signs of Allah, are considered to be wasteful of emotion due to their indifference. Another Qur'anic verse declares the painful end of wastefulness:

**“...surely Allah does not guide him who is extravagant, a liar.”** (Ghafir, 40:28)

Then there are deviations or the excesses committed in belief, one of the most important of which is to ask directly of righteous individuals when visiting their graves. What needs to be done in such circumstances is to reflect on the deeds of righteousness that such individuals performed during their worldly lives, to contemplate their elevated stations before Allah Almighty, and to ask of Allah for the sake of these deeds and stations.

In addition, it is also a misconception and falsehood to rely unconditionally upon the intercession of righteous individuals. As declared in a Qur'anic verse: **“On that Day, intercession is not of any avail except his, to whom the All-Merciful gives permission and with whose word is acceptable to Him.”** (Ta-Ha, 20:109)

It is also incorrect to claim that righteous individuals know everything and have knowledge of the thoughts and feelings that occur to people's hearts. They can only know if and when Allah Almighty makes this known to them. Otherwise, even the Prophets cannot know everything.

**As a powerful case in point, the Messenger of Allah,** upon him be blessings and peace, used to respond to certain questions with the answer, **“The one questioned knows nothing more than the questioner.”**

During the Ifq Incident (slander made against the beloved wife of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) Aisha),

for instance, Divine revelation came only a month later, until which time the Messenger of Allah, upon him be blessings and peace, could not say anything concerning the truth of the matter.

Similarly, the Divine revelation concerning the three people who did not take part in the Tabuk Campaign because of negligence and heedlessness came fifty days later.

**‘Uthman ibn Maz’un**, may Allah be well pleased with him, passed away in Medina, in the house of a woman named **Umm al-’Ala**. The woman said:

“O ‘Uthman, I bear witness that Allah has honoured you.”

**The Messenger of Allah**, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, intervened saying:

*“How do you know that Allah has honoured him?”*

The woman replied:

“By Allah, I do not know!”

The Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings, said:

*“As for ‘Uthman, death has come to him. I hope for the best to come to him from Allah. While I am Allah’s Messenger, I do not know what will become of me, or you.”*

Umm al-’Ala then said:

“By Allah, I will never again vouch for anyone after him (only hoping for good from my Lord).”  
(Bukhari, Tabaqat, 27)

It is declared in a Qur’anic verse:

**“Say: I am not the first of the messengers, and I do not know what will be done with me or with you: I do not follow anything but that which is revealed to me, and I am nothing but a plain warner.”** (Ahqaf, 46:9)

Someone once asked **Prophet Yaqub**, upon him be peace:

“O Prophet with an enlightened heart! **You perceived the smell of [your son] Yusuf’s shirt all the way from Egypt, while you could not see him when he was thrown into a well right here beside you?”**

Prophet Yaqub replied:

“Our portion in this matter resembles flashes of lightning. That is why sometimes the distant becomes clear to us, while at other times those things that are nearest to us remained obscure.”

The indiscriminate and mindless compliments that people pay to one another are also among those aspects of wastefulness that have been forbidden. **The Messenger of Allah**, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, states:

*“If one of you must praise someone, they should say, ‘I think such and such, and Allah is enough for him. I do not acquit or praise anyone in front of Allah, but I think them to be such-and-such,’ if he knows that of them.”* (Bukhari, Shahada, 16)

The perfection of belief is contingent upon a perfected intellect that is infused with revelation. The perfection of the mind is contingent upon the light of belief within it, or in other words, upon the maturity of the heart. Beliefs and ideas deprived of Divine light and filled with superstition are akin to oil lamps devoid of kerosene or are like lightbulbs without electricity. Such an intellect which lacks the inspiration of revelation – like a light bulb receiving inconsistent current – is doomed to ultimate ruin and destruction.

### **b. Wastefulness in Worship:**

Moderation in all matters and turning worship and worldly transactions into propitious worship is among the central injunctions of the religion of Islam. This is because the things that people are accustomed to doing tend to continue as they are, and become difficult to change.

The first thing that comes to mind concerning wastefulness during the observance of worship is the use of excess water during the ritual **ablution** and the **full body ablution** due to doubt and misgiving about their proper completion. **The Messenger of Allah,**

may Allah bless him and grant him peace, once saw **Sa'd**, may Allah be well pleased with him, performing the ritual ablution.

*“Why are you wasting all this water, Sa'd?” he asked.*

Sa'd, may Allah be well pleased with him, replied:

*“Is there wastefulness even in performing ablution?”* The Messenger of Allah replied:

*“Yes, even if you were beside a flowing river.”* (Ibn Maja, Tahara, 48)

Failing to perform the **prayer** in congregation, performing the prayer without due reverence and spirituality, as though wanting to get it out of the way, and such similar states are among the acts of wastefulness pertaining to one's worship. Of those who perform the prayer devoid of humble submission and serenity, Allah Almighty declares:

**“And woe to those worshippers, Those who are unmindful in their Prayers.”** (Maun, 107:4-5)

The Messenger of Allah, upon him be blessings and peace, describes a prayer whose merits are lost due to spiritual failings, that is to say, a prayer that is devoid of meaning is wasted:

*“A prayer is offered by a servant, while half of it may be accepted, or one-third, or a quarter, or one-fifth,*

*one-sixth, one-seventh, one-eighth, one-ninth, or even one-tenth.”* (Abu Dawud, Salat, 123, 124)

This goes to show that Allah Almighty demands worship of us that is offered in mindfulness and with an attentive heart. “...**Prostrate and draw near,**” (Alaq 96:19) He declares. Through this Qur’anic verse, Allah decrees that as we place our forehead on the ground in prostration, our heart be in a state of unbroken invocation and entreaty in His presence. That which carries the human being to the perfection of true belief is the joint use of the mental and spiritual faculties.

The Qur'an says of those who duly observe their prayer:

**“Successful indeed are the believers, Who are humble in their prayers.”** (Mu'minun 23:1-2)

Tarnishing the **fast**, one of Islam's five pillars, with such moral weaknesses as lying, gossip and talebearing, and in this way forfeiting its spiritual reward, also amounts to great wastefulness. **The Messenger of Allah**, upon him be peace and blessings, says:

*“Allah is not in need of anyone abandoning their food and drink who does not abandon lies and acting by them while fasting.”* (Bukhari, Sawm 8, Adab 51)

Fasting ought to make us realise the value of the Divinely-bestowed bounties. Likewise, by showing us just how weak we are through half a day's deprivation

of food and drink, fasting should also enable us to empathise with our impoverished brothers and sisters, to allow our hearts to reach out to them and to give in charity in the ardour and enthusiasm of worship, with the sense of humility and gratitude as though making our offering directly to Allah Himself. As is declared in a Qur'anic verse:

**“...Allah is He Who welcomes His servants’ turning to Him in repentance, and accepts what is offered as charity for His sake...”** (Tawba, 9:104)

The sacred month of **Ramadan**, in which fasting is held mandatory, is from beginning to end a month of Divine grace, spirituality, mercy, forgiveness and blessing. **The Messenger of Allah**, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, enjoined his followers to make the most of this blessed month in exuberance and fruitfulness, and without being wasteful.

Moreover, one's nights should be spent with prayers offered with a wakeful heart, repentance, remembrance and invocation of Allah and recitation of the Qur'an, and the daylight hours with acts of worship, charity and righteousness offered in complete devotion. The time for breaking the fast – those special moments when prayers are accepted – should be used for seeking forgiveness, for entreaty and in order to attain the inner peace of enabling another believer to break fast. These should be followed by the supererogatory Tarawih prayers offered in exact

conformity with their conditions. If we do not make good use of this blessed month, we would have failed to have taken advantage of the ocean of mercy and forgiveness flowing right beside us, and would have thus abandoned it to the ruinous vortex of wastefulness.

Similarly, failing to pay attention to the lawfulness of one's wealth and earnings as well as to the rights of others, concerning oneself with the futile and in so doing wasting away one's spiritual favour and blessing, represents the wastefulness pertaining to the Pilgrimage.

Indeed, it is stated in a Prophetic Tradition concerning a person who undertakes the Pilgrimage with unlawful earnings that when they proclaim, "Here I am! (Labbayk), their call will be met with the reply, *"May your call receive no response and happiness be not your reward, for your earnings are unlawful, your provision is unlawful, and your mount is unlawful. Return as a wrongdoer without any reward! Feel regret for having to face what causes you displeasure."* (Haythami, 209-210)

**As for the waste of alms and charity**, this refers to leaving the receiver under obligation and falling prey to such spiritual sicknesses as pretence and self-conceit. Allah Almighty declares:

**"Kind speech and forgiveness is better than charity followed by injury; and Allah is Self-sufficient,**

**Forbearing... O you who believe! do not make your charity worthless by reproach and injury,"** (Baqara, 2:263-264)

A believer must take pains to ensure that they give in charity to those who are truly in need. Praising such servants, Allah Almighty says of them: "**They are active in deeds of charity;**" (Mumenoon, 23:4)

It is very important to be able to give our alms and charity to those who are truly in need. Thorough research should be conducted to this end and one should come to the point of being able to recognise **such people from their faces.** This is what our Lord demands of us.<sup>2</sup>

In actual fact, being able to give of our wealth to the truly poverty-stricken is contingent on the ways in which we have earned it. Expressed differently, the places in which we spend our wealth in charity and alms are like mirrors which indicate the degree of lawfulness of our earnings.

**Failing to duly study and understand the Qur'an** and remaining indifferent to its commandments and prohibitions is tantamount to wasting such a great and precious Divine treasure. Allah Almighty describes those who are wasteful concerning the Qur'an, contrasting them with those who benefit from its spiritual illumination:

**“Then We gave the Book for an inheritance to those whom We chose from among Our servants; but of them is he who makes his soul to suffer a loss, and of them is he who takes a middle course, and of them is he who is foremost in deeds of goodness by Allah’s permission; this is the great excellence.”** (Fatir, 35:32)

Just as the most distinguished people are the community of the Prophet Muhammad, the most virtuous among them are those believers who read the Qur'an, commit it to heart, study its content and act upon its injunctions. Some of the people wrong their own selves: by learning the Qur'an but failing to read and act upon it as it requires, they squander away the greatest bounty. Some take the middle way: they are observant at certain times, but negligent at others. Others progress, by God's leave, in acts of goodness.

The Qur'an is the language of the heavens and earth and a spiritual treasure and blessing for hearts. It is a miracle of speech dedicated to the human being. Believing hearts that are in harmony with the Qur'an become an especial site of manifestation for the Creator of the Universe. A person who lives with the Qur'an experiences the bliss and serenity of this magnificent universe's being a miniature realm into which this seemingly endless and magnificent universe is squeezed. For a person of the heart, the Qur'an is a magnificent gate opening onto the realm of reflection.

In order to read the Qur'an, purification of the heart is as essential as bodily purification. This is because diseases of [the spiritual facet of] the heart prevent a person's proper encounter with the Qur'an. Those who are unable to follow the Qur'an's mercy and guidance face great disappointment.

Because the Qur'an is an expression of the Divine Will, those righteous, God-revering individuals who are close to Allah can perceive it best. Being of the pious and God-revering is a prerequisite to benefiting from the bounties of the Qur'an and, in so doing, attaining happiness in this world and in the Hereafter.

A further important point is that a small service which attracts Divine approval can surpass many a supererogatory act of worship. The following example from the Age of Happiness provides an apt illustration:

On a military expedition where the heat was particularly severe, the **Messenger of Allah**, upon him be peace and blessings, encamped in a suitable area. Some of the Companions were fasting. Those who were fasting fell asleep on account of fatigue. Those who were not fasting got up and pitched tents and carried water for the ritual ablution. However, at the time of breaking the fast, the Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings, said:

*"Those who were not fasting have taken away the reward."* (Muslim, Siyam, 100-101)

In much the same way, a person's being engaged in affairs of secondary or tertiary importance and neglecting to earn their **livelihood** and thus becoming dependent on others is a kind of wastefulness. It is stated in a Prophetic Tradition:

*"Allah the Exalted loves to see His servant fatigued in pursuit of the permissible (Halal)." (Suyuti, Al-Jami' al-Saghir, I, 65)*

On the other hand, lengthening one's words by using flowery language during **supplications** that are offered in public, raising one's voice to draw attention to oneself and in this way wearying the congregation present, also signifies squandering the essence of worship. The **Messenger of Allah**, upon him be peace and blessings, has stated:

*"O people! Lower your voices [when calling out to Allah]! For you are not calling One who is deaf or absent." (Bukhari, Jihad, 131; Muslim, Dhikr, 44)* He has thus forbidden loud and clamorous recitations of prayers. Such types of waste injure the spirit of worship and forfeit its blessing.

Another Prophetic Tradition states:

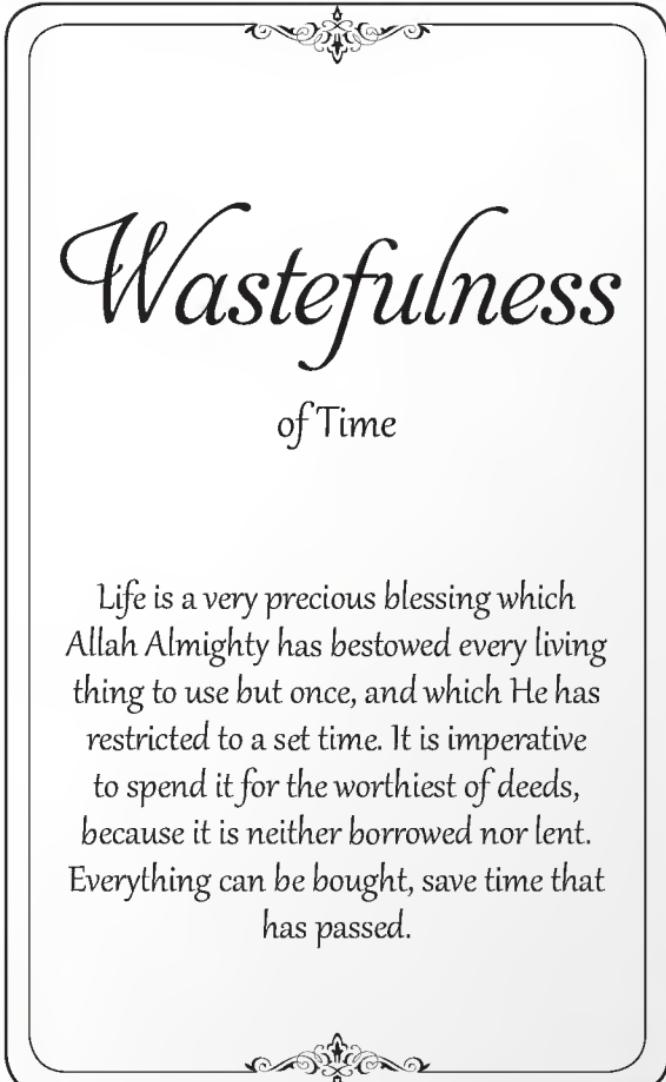
*"There will soon come a nation in this Community [of Muhammad] who will exceed the [established] bounds in cleanliness and supplication." (Abu Dawud, Tahara, 45)*

In short, Allah Almighty does not want our acts of worship to be wasted by being performed unconsciously, or devoid of spiritual effusion and grace. On the contrary, He commands that one draws near to Him in the spirituality and exuberance of **Ihsan**, and that they attain **ultimate union** with Him.

**May Allah Almighty protect us from being wasteful in neglecting affairs or exceeding the bounds concerning our belief and worship. May He enable and make easy for us the path to leading our lives in the exhilaration and fervour of perfected belief and the peace and pleasure of worship.**

**Amin.**





# *Wastefulness*

## *of Time*

Life is a very precious blessing which Allah Almighty has bestowed every living thing to use but once, and which He has restricted to a set time. It is imperative to spend it for the worthiest of deeds, because it is neither borrowed nor lent. Everything can be bought, save time that has passed.



## **WASTEFULNESS of Time**

All bounties that humankind have acquired, whether gratuitously or as a result of effort, are each a Divine favour. It is Allah Who creates all bounties out of nothing and Who grants His servant the necessary capacity and strength to obtain them. In this respect, humankind should not forget that the bounties they possess are, in fact, a Divine favour. They must live in the awareness that these are trusts for which they will one day account. As stated in a Qur'anic verse:

**“Or did you then think that We had created you in vain and that you shall not be returned to Us?”**

(Mumenoon, 23:115)

Therefore, when using the material and spiritual bounties we possess, we should remember that we have not been left at liberty but are obliged to use these in accordance with Divine approval.

Allah Almighty declares in another Qur'anic verse:



**“And on that Day, you will most surely be questioned as to all the favours .”** (Takathur, 102:8) He thus reminds us of the great Reckoning and emphasises our responsibility.

That is to say, Allah Almighty has prescribed certain measures in the use of the bounties He has bestowed, just as in their procurement. He has declared these in the form of the lawful (halal) and the unlawful (haram). Wastefulness is one of these unlawful things which causes one to forfeit the love and mercy of Allah and incur His wrath.

It is declared in a Qur'anic verse:

**“... and do not act extravagantly; surely He does not love the extravagant.”** (Anaam, 6:141)



### **The Wasteful Use of Time**

The **wasteful use of time** is one of the most common mistakes that human beings make, due to their heedlessness and forgetfulness.

Life is a very precious blessing which Allah Almighty has bestowed upon every living thing to use but once, and which He has restricted to an appointed period of time. It is imperative to spend it for the worthiest of deeds, because there are many things that a person can do at any given moment. Prioritising the

most important tasks for that particular moment is an important principle when it comes to the effective use of time.

For instance, a mother's breastfeeding her child is a beautiful expression of her compassion and mercy. However, continuing to feed her child in the event of a fire breaking out in the house is foolishness and grave negligence. She should strive to extinguish the fire, even if with a single bucket of water, as this task is more vital than the former. Any negligence on her part might lead to fatal consequences for both her and her child.

In much the same way, assigning high priority to the religion of Allah over and above other preoccupations – given the added importance of time in our day – is part of our responsibility towards time.

The most gratifying and meaningful moments for the noble Companions, who utilised their time in the best possible way, were those moments in which they communicated the message of Islam to others. One particular Companion who was about to be put to death thanked his persecutor when he allowed him three minutes' respite:

"So it seems I have three minutes to convey to you the message of Islam," he said.

While many people are caught up in disbelief and immorality in our day, approaching them with gentle words and communicating to them the beauties and refinement of Islam is a debt of belief and conscience for every believer.

Each and every moment is precious capital which one cannot afford to throw away. Wasting these moments on idle, empty pursuits is to endanger one's life in the Hereafter. Consequently, for those who are able to lift the veil of heedlessness, time is as precious a bounty as cannot be compared with anything else. Allah, glorified and exalted be He, declares in the Qur'anic chapter al-'Asr:

**"I swear by the time, most certainly, human is in loss, Except those who believe and do good, and enjoin on each other truth, and enjoin on each other patience."** (Asr, 103:1-3)

Beginning with an oath by time, this chapter reveals that time that is not used in way of counselling others in belief, deeds of righteousness, truth and patience is time that is wasted, and is a means of ruin for the human being. The mention of those who make proper use of their time as an exception poignantly illustrates that human beings, in the main, are painfully deceived in this regard.

Allah Almighty enjoins His servants in the matter of making proper use of their time in order to attain Divine grace:

**“So when you are free, still toil and seek and strive to please your Lord.”** (Inshirah, 94:7-8)

In other words, undertaking one form of worship or good work at the completion of another ensures that no time is spent without worship or goodness. For life is a blessing that has been given to us that we attain happiness in the Hereafter. Death, however, is akin to a note payable stating the date on which payment is due.

A businessperson signs a written agreement to pay a certain sum of money on a specific date. The due date specified allows time for payment of the amount owing. Similarly, the life of this world is comprised of a set period of time given to us that we may earn our Hereafter and attain Divine approval. Just as a businessperson who does not take the due date for payment seriously and fails to make preparations for payment at the appointed time eventually finds themselves in great distress, human beings cannot avoid facing ruin if they do not make proper use of the lifespan and respite granted to them. From the moment they are born, every individual is condemned to death – the actual sentence to be carried out at a time unknown. The appointed time is the moment of meeting with the Angel of Death, **Archangel Azra'il**, peace be upon him. While the date of payment on a note payable is known, the inevitable end of a person's life has been left a mystery. This is a dire reality which

necessitates a person's being ready to account for their actions at any given time.

One of the most important principles of the Sufi discipline is awareness of time (**wuquf-i zamani**). This concept draws attention to the necessity of using the blessing of time meticulously and painstakingly. Accordingly, a believer who seeks to purify their carnal self and refine their heart needs to be in the constant awareness of having to engage in self-criticism and spend their time performing deeds of righteousness. They should abstain from idle conversation by abandoning unnecessary tasks, or in other words, they should protect their speech, in the words of **Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi**, from becoming a 'laughingstock'. Allah, glorified and exalted be He, refers to another characteristic of the **prosperous believers**:

**"And who keep aloof from what is vain."**  
(Mumenoon, 23:3)

**"... and when they pass by what is vain, they pass by nobly."** (Furqan, 25:72)

A righteous believer must always be aware of their own inner world, and reflect upon the level of their repentance, praise, gratitude and resignation to Allah's will. Thinking deeply about the countless blessings present in their every limb and the thankfulness required for each and every one of these, they must be

repentant for the time they have spent in heedlessness. They must avoid mindlessness, free themselves of the burden of unnecessary worry concerning the future, and must busy themselves with attaining a state of sincerity in relation to the present moment. Expressed differently, they should be a 'Child of the Moment' (**Ibn al-Waqt**), who is fully aware of the value of their life, especially of the present moment in which they live, and who, through it, prepare for their Hereafter in the best possible way.

This is because wastefulness of time is one the greatest causes of regret. Indeed, the **Messenger of Allah**, upon him be peace and blessings, has said:

*"The people of Paradise will not have any regrets save for those moments in which they were not engaged in the remembrance of Allah and mention of His Names."* (Haythami, X, 73-74) He reminds us, in this way, of the need to use one's time engaged in those good deeds that are the capital for eternal happiness in the Hereafter. For regret will be to no avail when the bounties we have been given are taken away.

This being the case, we have to make the most of our lives while we still can, performing deeds of righteousness. We must try and give due thanks for every bodily limb and faculty we possess. For instance, we must endeavour to infuse the blessing of speech with remembrance of Allah, which is healing for our hearts.

**The Messenger of Allah**, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, advised the Mother of the Believers **Hafsa**, may Allah be well pleased with her, as follows:

*“Hafsa! Beware of excessive speech, for speech outside the invocation and remembrance of Allah deadens the heart. Remember Allah often for this revives the heart.”* (Ali al-Muttaqi, I, 439/1896)

Allah, glorified and exalted be He, cautions us in way of two things in particular:

**“And spend out of what We have given you before death comes to one of you, so that he should say: My Lord! why didst Thou not respite me to a near term, so that I should have given alms and been of the doers of good deeds?”** (Munafiqoon, 63:10)

The following verse from the Qur'an is also cautionary, vividly depicting the cries and lamentations of those who waste their lives, and demonstrating that no excuses will be accepted from them:

**“And therein they will cry aloud:**

**‘O our Lord! take us out, we will do good deeds other than those which we used to do. Did We not preserve you alive long enough, so that he who would be mindful in it should mind? And there came to you the warner; therefore taste; because for the unjust, there is no helper.** (Fatir, 35:37)

Just as is the case with all other life's blessings, the main cause of the waste of time is the failure to duly comprehend death, or to heedlessly see ourselves as being somehow immune from its awesome reality. Whereas, it is stated in a Prophetic Tradition:

*"Remember often the destroyer of all pleasures."*  
(Tirmidhi, Qiyama, 26) Continued indifference in spite of this Prophetic warning will one day surely turn into bitter torment.

**The Messenger of Allah**, upon him be peace and blessings, once said:

*"There is no one who dies and does not feel regret."*

The Companions asked:

*"Messenger of Allah, what shall they regret?"*

When the Messenger of Allah, upon him be blessings and peace, said:

*"If a good-doer, they regret that they did not do more, and if a wrongdoer, they regret that they did not give up evil and reform their ways."* (Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 59)

When the human being beholds with the eye of their heart the workings of Divine power displayed in their own selves and in the universe, they feel compelled to think about how they should lead their worldly lives. The greatest truth that ought to most concern human beings in life is **death**. What a great

lesson for humankind is that momentous farewell! One who knows death and is aware of their being a traveller to the Hereafter is not deceived by fleeting pleasures and by the playthings in the world guest-house and does not waste their time with them.

The Qur'an states:

**"And We did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between in play and fun. We have created them only with truth, but most people do not know."** (Dukhan, 44:38-39)

Were all fleeting bounties to be gathered in a single person and they to live in felicitous peace for a thousand years, what good would it do them? Is not their final destination beneath the very soil on which we tread? Do human beings not take lesson that the bloom and vitality of every mortal is constantly ground away in the mill of time? What a tragic delusion in the name of one's eternal future is it to view as permanent those bounties which promote a carnal existence in this worldly life lived in oblivion of the Hereafter, and view as real the world's playthings!

**In the words of Imam Shafi'i:**

*"Does it make any sense for caravans to build [permanent] dwellings on their stopovers while they are on journey?"*

What a tragic waste of life and bitter exhaustion is the situation of those wearied in pursuit of passing pleasures, devoid of any thought of the Hereafter and purely for the sake of worldly comfort! What tremendous remorse and longing for those who wasted their lives as though they would never die, will one day feel for this wasted time!

Those who succumb to bodily desires forever try to avoid thinking about the grave and the realm beyond, in order to maintain their carnal existence. In this respect, the grave for them turns into fear for the future and the stuff of nightmare. This is because every human being wants to live within the world in which they have invested their heart and dreams. Can a wise person ever give up a mansion for ruins? But there is many a person who brings their Hereafter to ruin for the sake of building up their worldly life.

**Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi** indicates the road to freedom from enslavement to the world, and attaining eternal happiness:

*Attach yourself not to worldly possessions that when death comes you may leave them easily... Hold fast to the One Who holds on to you, for He is the First and the Last."*

*"Most people fear the death of their bodies, while what ought to be feared is the death of the heart."*

There is an appointed last breath for every living being. This cannot be averted and the worldly life prolonged beyond it. As is the Divine custom, time continues its course. Things can be bought and sold in the life of this world, but never the lost time. While no one can remain indifferent to even the smallest amount of gold going to waste, how sad it is that people generally are careless about the time wasted which cannot be purchased with any amount of gold.

**Farid al-Din Attar**, may his secret be sanctified, says:

*“Four things cannot be turned back: the words uttered without much thinking, the sped arrow, a calamity that struck, a life wasted away.”*

One of Allah's friends offers the following words of advice in way of understanding the value of time, spending our days in the most fruitful way and thus avoiding heedlessness:

“Visit the sick in hospitals from time to time. Reflect upon the blessing of health with which you have been favoured and be grateful that you are not suffering from illness and disease like those who are hospital-bound.

Visit prisons also and contemplate the confinement of those prisoners and the difficulties they face therein. Consider that murders are committed in a



moment of insanity, and that there are also, on the other hand, those innocent people who have been falsely and unjustly convicted and incarcerated for crimes they did not commit. Consider that you too could have been in their place. Be thankful to Allah Almighty that He has preserved you from such a situation and pray for the deliverance of those imprisoned there.

Then go to the cemetery and listen to the silent cries and lamentations rising from the gravestones there. Appreciate the value of your time knowing that regret will be of no use to you after losing the blessing of life. Recite the Opening chapter of the Qur'an for those lying there and strive to spend your days from this time forth in praise, thankfulness and remembrance of Allah."

Hence, a believer should try to live their life without forgetting the Almighty at any time or in any place. Allah Almighty declares:

**"And be not like those who forsook Allah, so He made them forsake their own souls: these it is that are the transgressors. "** (Hashr, 59:19)

**Abu 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami** says that wasting time and keeping company with people whose sole concern is the world is one of the greatest failings of the carnal soul. He subsequently offers the following remedy:



*"It is imperative that one recognises the value of time, the most precious thing in life, and spends it in pursuits that are as precious, that is to say, in constant remembrance and worship of Allah, and in striving to establish sincerity in one's soul. Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, says: 'Indeed, of the excellence of a person's Islam is that they leave what does not concern them.'"* (Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 11)

Prophetic Traditions which state the necessity of recognising the value of time and spending it in a state of spiritual vigilance include the following:

*"Treasure five things before five:*

*Your youth before old-age; your health before illness; your wealth before poverty; your free time before preoccupation; and your life before death."* (Hakim, Mustadrak, IV, 341; Bukhari, Riqaq, 3; Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 25)

*"The feet of the servant of Allah shall not move [on the Day of Judgement] until they are questioned concerning five things:*

- 1. concerning their life and what they did with it;*
- 2. concerning their youth and where they spent it;*
- 3. concerning their wealth, whence they acquired it, and in what way they spent it;*
- 4. and what was it that they did with the knowledge that they had."* (Tirmidhi, Qiyama, 1)

*“There are two blessings in which many people suffer loss: health and free time.”* (Bukhari, Riqaq, 1)

Allah, glorified be He, has declared in many verses of the Qur'an that He will call His servants to account for all the blessings and favours, material or spiritual, that He has bestowed upon them. Muslim scholars have expressed different views on the most important blessings that are the subject of this Divine reckoning:

**Ibn Mas'ud**, may Allah be well pleased with him, states that these are “security, health and free time”, while according to **Mu'awiya ibn Qurra**, may Allah have mercy on him, “The severest account on the Day of Judgement is the account for free time.” (Bursawi, X, 504)

**Imam Ghazali's** following warning against wasting time is telling:

*“My dear son, suppose that today you die. How you will be grieved for all your moments of heedlessness, exclaiming, ‘If only!’ But Alas!”*

**Junayd al-Baghdadi** states:

*“A day in this world is better than a thousand years of the Hereafter. For the matter of profit and loss pertains only to this world, and there is nothing to be gained or lost in the Hereafter.”*

Time that is wasted is a painful and irreparable loss because all the files of the past are closed. However, we must endeavour to make up for these losses, at the very least spiritually, by turning to Allah at every moment through prayer, repentance and supplication.

The river of life flows rapidly. The Divinely-appointed days of our fleeting lives are like the drops that fill a glass. We must not forget that with each passing day we are moving towards the end of our limited lifespan, drawing one day away from the world and one day closer to the grave.

Since the appointed hour of our death is unknown to us, we must constantly be prepared for the last breath, not forgetting that we may encounter **Archangel Azra'il**, the Angel of Death, upon him be peace, at any moment. In the words of famous Turkish poet **Necip Fazıl Kisakürek**:

*At the moment of death when the veils are lifted*

*Welcoming the Angel of Death is the true accomplishment.*

If we are to think of it, the future is as fraught with danger as it is with happy news. The number of leaves remaining from our book of life remains unknown.

**May Allah, the All-Glorified and All-Exalted, enable us to remain in a constant state of faith-**

ful servitude<sup>3</sup> to Him until – as is expressed in a Qur'anic verse – what is certain (death) comes to pass, and allow us to die<sup>4</sup> as Muslims. May He favour us all with leading lives free of wastefulness, establishing moderation and balance in our inner and outer worlds, and adorning with good works the bounty of time with which He has bestowed us.

Amin.



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3. See 15:99.

4. See 3:102







# Wastefulness

## in Knowledge

The spirit which will mould societies with true knowledge and wisdom is not the spirit of egocentric pedants pouring over bulky volumes, but the spirit of righteous believers – those people of service who deepen their hearts with the wisdom of the Qur'an, and who are a light of peace and compassion for humanity.



Knowing is to solve the mystery of creation and to love wisdom. It is to be able to receive spiritual illumination from the manifestations of Divine majesty and the workings of Divine Power.





## **WASTEFULNESS in Knowledge**

For life to acquire spirituality and meaning, it must be kept secure from wastefulness and similar vices because wastefulness is a precursor of disaster for the individual, for the family and for society as a whole.

All the blessings bestowed upon the human being are each a trust. If these trusts do not find their true place and are wasted under the yoke of carnal desires, Allah Almighty will remove their blessing.

Wastefulness should not be understood only as a waste of wealth and material possessions. This is because it is related to all facets of life. We ought to know that frittering one's life away is wastefulness/ Preoccupation with knowledge that has no benefit and misusing it by making it a vehicle for personal gain also amounts to great wastefulness.

### **Wastefulness in Knowledge**

The pursuit of knowledge is an exalted activity which satisfies the innate human inclination for



learning. Knowledge, which constitutes the summit of human dignity, carries the believer to the perfection of intimate knowledge of Allah Almighty and extolling Him through acts of worship.

The most excellent of knowledges is intimate knowledge of Allah. In other words, it is to be able to know Allah Almighty with the heart. In this transient worldly realm that is a trial arena, all learning activities which fail to carry the servant to this outcome, which do not enable the servant to attain wisdom and spiritual closeness to Allah, constitute wastefulness of the innate inclination for learning that exists in human nature.

In the Qur'an, the term 'knowledge' ('ilm) is mentioned in terms of its role in leading people to feelings of piety and reverential awe before Allah. As declared in a Qur'anic verse:

**“What! he who is obedient during hours of the night, prostrating himself and standing, takes care of the hereafter and hopes for the mercy of his Lord! Say: Are those who know and those who do not know alike? Only the men of understanding are mindful.”** (Zumar, 39:9)

Closer analysis of this Qur'anic verse in its linguistic context, that is, in consideration of the text and discourse that surrounds it, clearly reveals precisely what is implied by knowledge and ignorance in the eyes of Allah. Accordingly, the foremost points to be

taken into consideration for inclusion among “**those who know**”, or among those who are acquainted with mystery, wisdom and truth, are:

1. Attaining spiritual togetherness with Allah Almighty by means of prostration and standing in prayer during the night.
2. A constant concern about the reckoning to take place in the Hereafter for our every state and act.
3. Being in a constant state of entreaty and supplication, hoping for the mercy of our Lord.
4. Leading a life of piety and God-consciousness, namely, that which engenders nearness to Allah, preserving the inner world from the negative traits which pull a person away from Allah, and to strive for the Divine attributes of beauty to become manifest upon us.
5. To become people of perfect goodness (Ihsan) and generosity, who possess noble conduct, and who live in the consciousness of being under the surveillance of Divine cameras.
6. Showing all the effort required for the heart’s protection from greed and ambition.
7. To patiently persevere in the face of difficulty encountered in the practice and propagation of the religion (of Islam).

**The main characteristics of “those who do not know” are the following:**

1. Denial and ingratitude.
2. Turning to Allah only during times of hardship and forgetting servanthood and entreaty at times of ease.
3. Associating partners with Allah to mislead people from the path of God in the way of carnal passions and desires. Indeed, as is stated in a Qur'anic verse: **Have you seen him who takes his low desires for his god? Will you then be a protector over him?**"

(Furkan, 25:43)

All human knowledge is nothing but the discovery of the laws that Allah has placed in the universe upon the creation. The advancement of knowledge is possible through an increase in the number of these discoveries. However, determining only the Divine laws of the creation and operation of the universe is not the true “**knowing**” that carries the servant to the wisdom of their creation. Real **knowing** is to grasp the purpose of life, to understand the non-verbal language of other beings, and to be able to solve mysteries through wisdom.

**Knowing** is to be acquainted with Divine majesty and the workings of Divine power and to be able to benefit from spiritual luminance and manifestation.

**Knowing** is to find the One Who answers one's needs. Such a need is, as expressed in a Qur'anic verse, to "die as Muslims".<sup>5</sup>

**Knowing** is to free oneself from enslavement to the carnal self before death strikes and wakes us up to the morning of truth.

**Knowing** is to be able to call oneself to account before one is called to account in the Hereafter.

**Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi** was one of those who deepened first in Islamic sciences and delved into the ocean of gnosis. He expresses the period of his life wherein he was at the pinnacle of the external sciences, but had not yet tasted nearness to Allah, saying, "I was raw". The phase in which he received manifestations of Divine wisdom in his heart he describes with the words, "I was cooked." The period of maturity in which the manifestations of Divine mysteries opened themselves up to him like a book he summates with the words, "I was burned".

Indeed, when someone deepens in knowledge, his sensitivity increases. True knowledge renders a person a wanderer in the valleys of astonishment and amazement. As a person acquires insight into the wisdom and truths in the universe, they come to understand their helplessness before the Divine power

5. Al-i Imran, 3:102

and majesty, know their place, and comprehend their nothingness. In other words, they know their own self. And one who knows their own self, knows their Lord.

**The one who has knowledge** recognises the True Owner of creation and dominion and has a deep affection and compassion for all His creatures.

**The one who has knowledge**, forgives, shows patience, and loves others.

**The one who has knowledge** seeks the approval and closeness of their Lord, and making sacrifices on His path becomes for them a source of delight.

**The one who has knowledge** does not offend, nor take offence. Their tongue exudes compassion.

**The one who has knowledge** submits to God's good pleasure and approval when they are forced to choose between the world and the Hereafter, or in other words between the approval of people and the approval of Allah.

**The one who has knowledge** endeavours to be with their Lord at all times – when they are standing<sup>6</sup>, sitting, or lying on their side.

**The one who has knowledge** is in a constant state of contemplation before Divine Majesty and

the workings of Divine Power. Gentleness and moral refinement becomes for them second nature.

**The one who has knowledge** is a person of the heart.

**The one who has knowledge** finds peace and happiness in every place and circumstance.

**The one who has knowledge** feels responsible for all society.

**The one who has knowledge** comprehends that his country, his nation and fellow Muslims are each a trust. For the protection of Islamic Faith, honour, dignity, property and life can only be possible through the protection of one's nation and people.

**The one who has knowledge** strives to lead a spiritual life to free themselves from enslavement to the carnal self.

**The one who has knowledge** has been saved from preoccupation with the deceptive playthings of the fleeting world. Their sense of fleeting ownership extends beyond their heart also.

**The one who has knowledge** is one who frees their heart from being a repository, and from the evil of lust and fame.

**The one who has knowledge** possesses the quality of heart to be able to respond to the enticing

calls of lust, fame and fortune with the words, "Allah forbid!" (maādha l-lah)<sup>7</sup>.

**The one who has knowledge** perceives their nothingness before the majesty of Divine knowledge.

**The one who has knowledge** is the one who knows that they do not know.

**The one who has knowledge** is one who avoids foolishness and is aware of what it is that they need to know.

**The one who has knowledge** derives pleasure from the compassion, service and humility that are the fruits of faith, because they have tasted the sweetness of belief.

**The one who has knowledge** always opens his eyes to the wonders in the Universe. That is, they are filled with admiration for the wonders of Divine art in the universe.

**The one who has knowledge** understands the language of the universe. For everything speaks to the knower.

**The one who has knowledge** achieves a harmony of mind and heart.

**The one who has knowledge** experiences the thrill of the love and rapture of belief.

**The one who has knowledge** savours direct knowing.

**The one who has knowledge** goes from the cause to the Creator of Causes, from the product to the Maker, and from the art to the Absolute Artisan.

One who **knows** their Lord in their heart knows everything. One who **does not know** Him, knows nothing. For they have turned foolish and their hearts have gone blind.

The **Pride of Humanity**, upon him be peace and blessings, the highest example of those who know their Lord, says:

*“By Allah, if you knew what I know, you would laugh little and weep much, go out in the wilderness, beseeching Allah out loud (in utmost fervour and feeling).”* (Ibn Maja, Zuhd, 19)

**When ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab**, may Allah be well pleased with him, passed away, **‘Abd Allah ibn Mas’ud**, may Allah be well pleased with him, said:

“No doubt, he took nine-tenths of knowledge with him.”

One of the Companions who were present interjected, saying:

“You say so even while the majority of the Companions are still among us?”

Ibn Mas'ud, may Allah be well pleased with him, replied: "I speak rather of the knowledge of Allah, not the external knowledge of Islam."

It is declared in a verse from the Qur'an:

**"...among all His servants, only those possessed of true knowledge stand in awe of Allah..."** (Fatir, 35:28)

As can be understood from this Divine declaration, knowledge which does not engender a sense of piety and feelings of reverential awe toward Allah in the heart, is not the **knowledge** that is esteemed in the eyes of Allah and lauded in the Qur'an and the Prophetic Tradition. Given this, what a terrible delusion it is to hide behind certain excuses in the acquisition of knowledge and to make concessions in Allah's commandments and prohibitions, to open the door to various spiritual weaknesses and to make allowances and justifications for them.

Undoubtedly, the worldly sciences are also necessary, given they are used properly and in the right place. For with their advancement the worldly sciences present new insights and proofs to human understanding concerning the manifestations of Divine Majesty. In this way, the splendour of the Divine art and its wondrous manifestations are grasped in a deeper sense. Within this context, all scientific pursuits in our day also, from studies of the universe to advancements in genetics and technological wonders,

lucidly offer the Divine Art for the observation of human beings.

It is declared in a verse from the Qur'an:

**“We will soon show them Our signs in the Universe and in their own souls, until it will become quite clear to them that it is the truth. Is it not sufficient as regards your Lord that He is a witness over all things?”** (Fussilat, 41:53)

The purpose of true knowledge is to be able to attain intimate knowledge of Allah by acquainting oneself with the Divine secrets hidden in the physical and metaphysical world. That is to say, it is to benefit spiritually from the truth of the All-Great Creator's existence, in addition to the workings of His Power and the manifestations of His Majesty.

Woe to those hearts which are as blinded by their heedlessness as to miss the Divine art in the universe despite all scientific advancements and discoveries!

Those who use knowledge for their own base desires and ambitions and do wrong to society in reality betray knowledge itself and, as a result, perpetrate a tremendous intellectual and spiritual wastefulness. However, the usefulness of the sciences requires disciplining the mind and the heart in the light of the Qur'an and the Prophetic Practice in way of dispelling the various carnal inclinations and

weaknesses which debilitate humanity. Knowledge or sciences acquired without such a discipline can turn into a means of delusion by dragging a person to paths of destruction.

Unfortunately, in our day, only the intellectual capacities of a person are considered in scholarship, while no attention is paid to whether or not they possess the spiritual merit and qualifications that will enable them to duly shoulder this knowledge. This is notwithstanding the fact that a mere outward acquisition of knowledge is not sufficient for eternal happiness and salvation.

As a matter of fact, a person who has not been able to transform their knowledge into deeper understanding – for instance one who has studied law – may turn tyrant or executioner. Likewise, a person who has studied medicine can turn into a human butcher where they should be restoring others to health. While an administrator deprived of compassion and affection despite their intellectual capacity, becomes a despot tyrannising those under their command. On account of their knowledge, such individuals can inflict the harm that an ignorant person cannot, and with much greater intensity and ease. Because they waste their knowledge, by misusing and misspending it, they condemn themselves to eternal loss and ruin.

**Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi**, may his secret be sanctified, touches upon this truth in his *Mathnawi* as follows:

*“A knowledgeable, intelligent person is all very good, but take lesson from Iblis and do not appraise (yourself) too highly (if your knowledge is not in harmony with your heart). Do not forget that the accursed Iblis – eternally rejected from Allah’s Mercy – was for hundreds of thousands of years one of those closest to Allah and chief to the angels. With his knowledge and worship he succumbed to his pride and insolence and vexed Adam, upon him be peace. He looked down on Adam and was thus abased and disgraced.”*

Indeed, what, other than a great liability, is knowledge which drives a person to arrogance and pride, and which ultimately destroys them, even if it is comprised outwardly of what is good and useful? This is why, in asking Allah Almighty for knowledge, the **Messenger of Allah**, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to say:

*“O Allah, I ask You for beneficial knowledge (‘ilm al-nafi’) and seek refuge in You from knowledge that is of no benefit...”* (Muslim, Dhikr, 73)

Within this context, just as knowledge concerning the proper observance of religious obligations is an essential obligation binding upon all individuals (fard al-ayn), the knowledge and practice of such matters

as complete trust and reliance in Allah (tawakkul), sincerity (ihlas), and protection from hypocrisy, is also an individual duty. Negligence in the learning and application of these is a cause for ruin in the Hereafter. Those who fail to acquire beneficial knowledge, no matter how much they know, are deprived of the greatest truth – ultimate union with Allah.

**In advising against turning the pursuit of knowledge into wastefulness in time and exertion, Imam Ghazali states:**

*The knowledge you pursue should enlighten your heart and ennable your character. Just as if you discovered that you had one week to live, you would of course not occupy yourself with studying sciences that would not be of any use to you. You would rather engage yourself in monitoring the state of your heart and in understanding the characteristics of your soul, shunning attachment to the world, purifying your soul from blameworthy characteristics, occupying yourself with love and worship of Allah and adopting praiseworthy characteristics.*

*No day or night passes upon a servant in which their death is not possible. Accordingly, the knowledge with which a person must occupy themselves is that which increases them in spiritual sensibility before the Divine Majesty and which enables them to reform their inner worlds.*

As such, knowledge is an arduous affair. The reality of knowledge is revealed through its practice and experience. Knowledge that is not put into practice is – as the Qur'an declares – as meaningless an exertion as, "**a donkey carrying a load of books**"<sup>8</sup>.

Knowledge is knowledge only if it leads a person to Allah, to truth, to piety, and to deeds of righteousness. **Satan**, too, possessed knowledge, as did **Qarun**. But this knowledge inflated their ego and dragged them into insatiable arrogance and pride. And succumbing to this carnal gratification, they relied excessively on their own egos.

On this account, if knowledge is not adequately internalised and translated into action in this way, if it does not become reflected upon one's character, become part of a person's nature and rise to the level of intimate knowledge of Allah, if it does not lead the servant to a sense of nothingness, humility and annihilation, then all efforts in the name of that knowledge are as good as wasted.

It is also important to note that Allah Almighty has presented all the truths and mysteries to human beings by means of the Qur'an. Indeed, it is within the Divine Book that the essence of all knowledge lies. The essential reality of **everything**<sup>9</sup> there is in

8. Jumua, 62:5.

9. Anaam, 6:59.

the universe, great and small, is hidden in the Qur'an. Allah Almighty declares:

**“The All-Merciful taught the Qur'an; He has created human, taught him speech.”** (Rahman, 55:1-4) The Qur'an comprises the last message of Allah Almighty to humankind.

The knowledge that the Ummah and humanity are most in need of today is the knowledge of the Qur'an. In this respect, more attention needs to be paid to Qur'anic education in our day. However, duly understanding the Qur'an requires one to enter its spiritual atmosphere and possess the precious, inner jewel that is piety and God-consciousness. As such, the Qur'an cautions the believers as follows:

**“And they who, when reminded of the communications of their Lord, do not fall down there at deaf and blind..”** (Furqan, 25:73)

**“And certainly We have set forth to men in this Quran similitudes of every sort that they maybe mindful.”** (Zumar, 39:27)

The Qur'an thus declares that we must absolutely establish a spiritual connection with it. As indispensable as physical cleanliness is for this endeavour, spiritual cleanliness, that is, spiritual education, is just as imperative.

**“Do they not then reflect on the Quran? or are there locks on the hearts?”** (Mohammad, 47:24)

**“He will indeed be successful who purifies it.”**  
(Shams, 91:9)

Our guidance manual, the Qur'an, invites us to deep contemplation. Since the Qur'an expresses the Divine Will, those who are close to Allah Almighty better perceive it. For it is stated therein:

**“...Observe your duty to Allah. Allah is teaching you. And Allah is knower of all things.”** (Baqara, 2:282) For this reason, every Quranic verse opens up to us in accordance with our spiritual state.

In the Qur'an, the following admonition is given to the entire Muslim community through the person of **Allah's Messenger**, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

**“...and if you follow their low desires after what has come to you of knowledge, you shall not have against Allah any guardian or a protector.”** (Rad, 13:37)

The signification of the Qur'an with the words **“the Knowledge”** (al-'ilm) in this verse illustrates that the knowledge we Muslims must acquire first and foremost is the Qur'anic knowledge, and an intellectual life without the Qur'an is unthinkable. But unfortunately today, Qur'anic learning is relegated by some Muslims to a second, or even third priority level.

How unfortunate it is for the Muslims to view the Qur'anic education they are to offer their children not with the seriousness of intellectual inquiry, but rather as a simple summer holiday program or leisure activity! That is to say, with no other purpose than just getting it out of the way. One of the greatest neglects of parents towards their children is that they do not attach nearly as much importance to the meaning and content of the Qur'an as they do to its recitation.

Failing to pay due attention to the Qur'an, the greatest gift of Allah Almighty to humanity, and making light of Qur'anic schools by assigning greater importance to other worldly studies, is to seek the future in a dead end. For human beings are more in need of spiritual sustenance than material sustenance.

**How beautifully Rumi expresses this:**

*"Do not overfeed your body, for it will eventually be sacrificed to the earth. Look to nourishing your heart. For it is that which will be honoured and exalted. Provide spiritual sustenance to your spirit. Offer it refined thought, subtle understanding, and spiritual provisions, that it goes forth to its destination well and sound."*

Worldly interests comprise fetters on our spiritual life, because one cannot reach Allah with a selfish heart. Inclination to carnal desires is like stone tied to one's waist: one can neither swim nor fly with it. If

a believer does not occupy themselves with the truth, falsehood will keep them more than occupied.

**Sa'di Shirazi** expresses this point beautifully:

*“The souls of those living in unrestrained revelry are repulsed by their own selves.”*

What a grievous confoundment it is to expect felicity from wretchedness. It is not the diplomas of mortals, but Allah Almighty, Who will grant felicity in the future. Indeed, the Qur'anic verse,

**“...But the treasures of the heavens and the earth belong to Allah. But the hypocrites do not understand this.”** (Munafiqoon, 63:7), is a great Divine warning in this regard.

Let us not forget that the spirit which is to mould societies with true knowledge and wisdom is not the spirit of egocentric pedants pouring over bulky volumes, but the spirit of righteous believers, who deepen their hearts with the wisdom of the Qur'an, and who are a source of peace and compassion for humanity.

The famous Turkish poet **Mehmet Akif** (Ersoy) (1873—1936) summarises the nature of the knowledge that invests servanthood with dignity and offers the necessary prescription to a human generation in crisis:

*By taking inspiration directly from the Qur'an,  
We should make Islam speak to the mind of the  
[modern] age....*

**“O Allah, protect us from falling victim to the woeful predicament of those unfortunates who, deprived of the Qur'anic bliss, suppose their misery felicity. Enable us to turn to You in servitude with a heightened spiritual awareness by calling ourselves to account before we are brought to account in Your presence in the Hereafter. Protect us from squandering away our eternal life by transgressing the Divine bounds in this fleeting world as a result of our fickle carnal desires and heedlessness.**

**Amin.**





# *Wastefulness*

in Moral Virtues

Our Lord commands that we lead our entire lives within the sphere of noble conduct, with a feeling heart as befits human dignity, because He has honoured the human being with moral virtues which is not the case for other creatures.

A religious life deprived of moral virtue is inconceivable. A belief that is not adorned with moral virtues is forever in great danger and risk against carnal and satanic storms.





## WASTEFULNESS in Moral Virtues

Morality comprises the noble character traits that are pleasing to Allah and that He wants to see in His servants. It is one of the greatest favours upon humankind. In line with the Prophetic Tradition, “*Assume the morality of Allah*,”<sup>10</sup> noble character constitutes the manifestation of the Divine attributes of beauty upon believing hearts.

In this respect, possessing good character, as an essential duty of servitude to Allah, is one of the most salient signs of our closeness to Allah. It is a noble value that crowns our servanthood.

Morality, which constitutes the honour and dignity of the human being, also reveals their most distinctive identity. For this reason, morality is a superior quality particular to the human being among all creation.

A perfected human being is a masterpiece of creation in this worldly arena of trial, bearing the subtle

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10. Munawi, *al-Ta'arif*, p. 564.



and graceful manifestations of Divine art. The human species, created as the exceptional example of unfathomable subtleties, can embody this exalted position only through leading a life of servanthood illuminated with moral virtues.

The heart, which functions as a kind of protective case for morality, was bestowed with the lofty honour of being the focus of the Divine Gaze. That being the case, if the human being leads their life in pursuit of their carnal desires and fails to adorn their inner world with moral virtues, they would have betrayed human dignity, and wasted away their elevated standing before Allah. And this amounts to a person's frittering away this lofty position in a grave act of waste, while they have been created in the most beautiful form among creation and conferred an exceptional honour by Allah Almighty.

The purpose of morality is to provide the human being with the consciousness of being forever under Divine watch, in this way purging them of unrefined characteristics, and in this way allowing them to become the ideal human type envisaged by Islam – the complete or perfected human being (**al-insan al-kamil**). It is to be able to inscribe such elevated characteristics upon a person's essence as grace, refinement, nobility, modesty, generosity, mercy and compassion, to the point of their becoming one's second nature.

In this respect, morality is an inseparable part of religion: its spirit and essence. Indeed, our greatest guide, the **Messenger of Allah**, upon him be peace and blessings, who was sent as a mercy to the worlds, encapsulates his exalted mission in the following words:

*“I have not been sent but to perfect good character.”<sup>11</sup>*

This goes to show that a religious life deprived of moral virtue cannot be possible. A belief that is not adorned with moral virtues is like an exposed candle flame, such that it is forever in great danger and risk against carnal and satanic storms.

As such, we are obliged to protect our religion and our belief by means of noble character, donning it like spiritual armour. The **Pride of Humanity**, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, says in one Tradition:

*“Jibril said that Allah, the All-Glorified and All-Exalted, said:*

*‘Assuredly, Allah, glorified and exalted be He, has chosen this religion (of Islam) for Himself. Thus nothing befits your religion except generosity and noble character. Therefore, ornament your religion with them.’”*

(Haythami, VIII, 20; ‘Ali al-Muttaqi, Kanz, VI, 392)

This is the all-important, all-encompassing role of good character in the practice of the religion of

11. Muwatta’ Husn al-Khuluq, 8.

Islam. While a life spent in heedlessness of moral values amounts to a tremendous waste of life, the fortunate hearts that have received a share of these precious values have attained the happiness of tasting the true sweetness and pleasure of Islamic faith.

The following incident demonstrates the function of good character as an immaterial bridge leading a person to the sphere of belief and guidance:

One of the Prophet's Companions **Hakim ibn Hizam**, may Allah be well pleased with him, was known for his noble manners and character. He was also a nephew of the Prophet's wife **Khadijah bint Khuwaylid**, may Allah be well pleased with her. Hakim was exceedingly generous and benevolent, and was a man of charity and good works. During the Age of Ignorance, when baby girls were buried alive, he would buy the infants from their fathers, save them from death and protect them.

He once asked the **Messenger of Allah**, upon him be peace and blessings:

“Messenger of Allah, what do you say about those things such as charity, freeing slaves and maintaining kinship, which I used to do to purify myself in the time of Ignorance (Jahiliyya)? Will there be any reward for them?”



The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, replied:

*“You became Muslim by virtue of all the good you did in the past.”* (Bukhari, Zakat, 24; Muslim, Iman, 194-196)

As is the case in this example, there are many incidents which demonstrate what a strong connection exists between **good character** and **belief**. Another one of these are the sorcerers which the **Pharaoh**, the arrogant tyrant driven by his power and pride who claimed godhead, assembled to contend with **Moses**, upon him be peace.

While these sorcerers initially lead their lives without belief, they were those fortunate individuals who would experience the mystery of good character being the key to belief. In fact, the courtesy that the sorcerers showed to **Prophet Moses**, upon him be peace, prior to the event, in allowing him to choose whether he should like to be the first to throw down his staff, ought to have pleased Allah Almighty that an affection for religion of Moses had at that moment begun to flourish in their hearts. Upon this spiritual groundwork, the miraculous manifestations to which they were then witness led them to belief in Allah. Such a perfected belief this was that it would allow no compromise whatsoever, even if it meant sacrificing their own lives.



Yet, the miracle that was a means to the sorcerers' belief was witnessed by the **Pharaoh** and his chiefs also. But they fell into the miserable misfortune of clinging onto their denial with an even more formidable obstinacy. As a result, the sorcerers were brutally killed by the Pharaoh. These admirable individuals who showed steadfastness in their belief and sacrificed their lives in its cause, were honoured with the favour of being mentioned in the Qur'an, and in this way becoming an elevated example for all believers to come until the Last Day.

Such is the lofty blessing of moral virtues as gentility, courtesy, tenderness of heart, generosity and compassion. Just consider that if noble character which becomes a means for those deprived of belief, to be ultimately honoured with it, to which sublime stations would it carry the people of belief?

In stark contrast, being dragged into excess in the matter of moral values paves the way for the degeneration of societies, and ultimately to great disasters. What a tremendous loss this is for the Hereafter! The peace and wellbeing of individuals and societies is possible through the raising of generations of elevated morality, that is, pious, brave, cultured generations of a mature spirituality and sensibility. As **Muhammad Iqbal** maintains, Muslims are responsible for the entire world.

Thus, our Lord forbids us committing excesses and following those who transgress the bounds of necessity in their wastefulness. It is declared in a verse from the Qur'an:

**“And do not follow the commands of those who are wasteful and commit excesses, Who make mischief in the land and do not act aright.”** (Shura, 26:151-152)

It is declared in another verse:

**“Those who love that indecency should spread concerning those who believe, surely for them is a grievous chastisement in this world and the Hereafter.”** (Noor, 24:19)

Deprivation of the two foremost moral virtues of **modesty** and a **sense of shame**, stems from the weakness and inadequacy of one's belief and commitment to Islam.

In stating, “**Modesty is part of faith**”, the *Messenger of Allah*,<sup>12</sup> upon him be peace and blessings, points to the crucial connection between this moral virtue and belief. Accordingly, those who want immodesty to spread in society, perpetrate the greatest crime against that society. However, the main goal of all the Divinely-revealed religions is to establish a

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12. Bukhari, Iman, 3.

solid social structure of good morality, after having established the belief in God's Oneness.

World history, which has been witness to many manifestations of Divine retribution brought on by immorality and depravity, is replete with powerful lessons for those who possess understanding. Wandering about the earth with an eye to taking lesson is sufficient in order to see this.

It is declared in a verse from the Qur'an:

**“Say: Travel in the earth, then see how was the end of the disbelieving criminals!”** (Naml, 27:69)

Societies' falling into the frenzy of wastefulness by exceeding the bounds in immorality are among the signs of the Last Day, which denotes the destruction of the world in its entirety. This, in turn, demonstrates the destructive capacity of wastefulness in moral values. The indecency and excess that will emerge at the approach of the world's end are described in many Prophetic Traditions as follows:

*“There will come a time for people when they will strive (only) for their stomach (their lust and appetite), their religion will be their dinar and dirham (their wealth), and their women will be their qibla (their direction of worship). They will be the evilest of creation and they will have no portion before Allah (in the Hereafter).”* (Ali al-Muttaqi, *Kanz al-'Ummal*, XI, 192/31186)

*“A time will come when a person will not care from what source they get their livelihood, whether it is lawful or unlawful.”* (Bukhari, Buyu', 7)

*“The time will come when the liar is confirmed and the truthful is belied, the deceitful is trusted and the trustworthy is considered treacherous. People will give testimony without being asked to do so, and they will swear an oath without being asked to do so.”* (Tabarani, XXIII, 314)

*“There will come a time when people will not enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil (that is, they will not encourage goodness and try to prevent evil).”* (Haythami, Majma' al-Zawa'id, VII, 280)

Likewise, one day, the **Messenger of Allah**, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

*“There will come a time when the heart of a believer will dissolve (from grief) as salt dissolves in water.”*

When asked the reason for this, he said:

*“Because they will see acts of wickedness, but will not be able to change them.”* (Ali al-Muttaqi, Kanz, III, 686/8463)

The following narration transmitted by **'AbdAllah ibn 'Umar**, may Allah be well pleased with him, is a telling example of how weakness and waste in moral values is a cause of destruction:

"The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, turned to us and said:

*'O Emigrants (Muhajirun), there are five things with which you will be tested, and I seek refuge with Allah lest you should live to see them:*

*1. Immorality never appears among a people to such an extent that they commit it openly, but plagues and diseases that were never known among their predecessors will spread among them (e.g. AIDS);*

*2. They do not cheat in weights and measures but they will be stricken with famine, severe calamity and the oppression of their rulers;*

*3. They do not withhold the prescribed annual alms (zakat) of their wealth, but rain will be withheld from the sky, and were it not for the animals, no rain would fall on them;*

*4. They do not break their covenant with Allah and His Messenger, but Allah will enable their enemies to overpower them and take some of what is in their hands;*

*5. Unless their leaders rule according to the Book of Allah and seek all good from that which Allah has revealed, Allah will cause them to fight one another." (Ibn Maja, Fitan, 22; Hakim, IV, 583/8623)*

Allah Almighty warns His servants frequently in the Qur'an, that they avoid facing such a predicament. For instance, declaring, "**He utters not a word but there is by him a watcher at hand**" (Qaf, 50:18), He informs us that we have not been left to our own devices and that everything we do is constantly being monitored. In this way, He invites us to a vigilance of heart, compliance with the bounds that He has established in our conduct and behaviour, and refraining from wasting our lives through excess, going to extremes, and through preoccupation with empty things.

In fact, there are many Qur'anic verses which encourage noble conduct through enjoining moderation in one's behaviour. Two of these are as follows:

**"They (the believers) always turn away from whatever is vain."** (Mumenoon, 23:3)

**"Be modest in your walk, and lower your voice; surely the most hateful of voices is braying of the asses."** (Luqman, 31:19)

Indeed, one of the main forms of behaviour that lead the human being to excess in morality is crudeness, or a lack of refinement. Crudeness, which denotes the abandonment of such moral virtues as grace and courtesy, is as indicated in the Qur'anic example, virtually amounts to the denial of human nature and the dismissal of humane qualities.

The kind of speech befitting the human being is, as the Qur'an states, **qawl layyin**<sup>13</sup>, or gentle words. Even when sending **Moses**, upon him be peace, to the **Pharaoh**, Allah Almighty commanded him to speak to him with gentle words.

Similarly, declaring, "Say to My servants that they should (only) say those things that are best:" (Isra, 17:53), Allah commands that we comply with the measures of correct conduct when addressing people. **Conveying precisely such a measure in the person of the Messenger of Allah**, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, another Qur'anic verse declares:

**"It was by a mercy from Allah that you deal with them gently, and had you been rough, hard hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around you; pardon them therefore and ask pardon for them, and take counsel with them in the affair; so when you have decided, then place your trust in Allah; surely Allah loves those who trust."** (Al-i Imran, 3:159)

On the same token, it is necessary to take the path of moderation in moral conduct, as in all other matters. Otherwise, many moral actions that are not excessive in themselves, are taken to extremes through excess, that is to say, they are misused or squandered.

As an example to going to extremes in the virtue, the moral quality of humility can be taken. At times people goes to extremes in showing humility in fact hiding a subtle egotism underneath which amounts to a waste of humility.

Indeed, there are some people who assume an attitude of modesty for the satisfaction they derive from being known as a humble person. This insincere and hypocritical state actually stems from the egotism of modesty, that is, from a self-praise under the guise of modesty.

For instance, saying such things as, “I, the poor slave of God, recite the entire Qur'an only once every three days,” “I was only able to build just one mosque and help only this or that many people,” are an expression of insincerity and arrogance under the guise of humility.

To the contrary, going to the other extreme in an attempt to be humble, that is to say, showing excessive humility in the face of an arrogant person, is itself a form of degradation and constitutes yet another waste of morality.

Similarly, such acts of immoderation as acting in a conceited manner in the name of maintaining one's seriousness or solemnity, or sliding to impertinence in human relations and especially in family life, are all

harms arising from the excessiveness in moral actions, that is, from wastefulness. That is to say, being measured in moral conduct, determining how one is to act and to whom, is a necessary part of not falling into waste in morality.

For instance, displaying great kindness and sensitivity, the **Messenger of Allah**, upon him be peace and blessings, teaches us how to address one's servants:

*“None of you should say, ‘My servant or my maid-servant,’ for all of you are the servants of Allah, and all your women are the servants of Allah; say instead, ‘My son, my daughter and young man.’”* (Muslim, Alfaż, 13)

In contrast, he commands his Community to address those people who pollute their inner worlds with vice and wickedness and who thus incur Divine wrath, according to their own level:

*“Do not call a hypocrite, master (sayyid), for if you take him to be a master, you will displease your Lord, the Most High.”* (Abu Dawud, Adab, 83; Ahmad ibn Hanbal, V, 346)

This goes to show that using such virtues as humility and courtesy indiscriminately in human relations is to commit waste in morality. This is because feeling love for those who are worthy of it and harbouring hostility towards the deserving is a moral imperative. What is important is to be able to observe the Divine criteria and thus maintain a balance in moral matters,

as is the case in every other matter, and to in this way display the character of a mature believer.

**The Messenger of Allah**, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, put the Islamic morality into practice himself in his own life with great attentiveness and grace, and exhorted his Community to do the same, through the example of his own exemplary person.

As a matter of fact, the **Messenger of Allah**, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, did not confront any member of the community on account of one of their actions or faults, even if they were guilty. Instead, implying that he could not impute such an action to them, he questioned his own faculty of sight, saying, “*What is it that I see you thus [i.e. doing such and such]?*<sup>14</sup>

Again, as a manifestation of this refined educational method, upon once sensing that someone had passed wind in the mosque (and thus invalidated his ablution), the **Messenger of Allah**, upon him be peace and blessings, instructed all those present, saying, “*Let those who have eaten camel meat perform ablution.*” In this way, he avoided embarrassing the man in the presence of others by not identifying him publicly, and warned the entire community to avoid such behaviour.

14. Bukhari, Manaqib, 25; Muslim, Salat, 119.

In other words, he required all the Companions present to perform the ablution so as to screen the involuntary offence of a single individual.<sup>15</sup>

For the Prophetic morality constantly urged constant compassion, courtesy, spiritual sensibility and tenderness of heart. It is for this reason that in response to desert nomads who came to him and called out to him crudely saying, "Muhammad, Muhammad!" the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was lenient each and every time, and would respond with the words, "*How can I help you?*" (Muslim, Nadhr, 8; Abu Dawud, Ayman, 21/3316)

In this regard, just as in the case of cautioning and guiding others, one also needs to take into consideration a person's level in virtuous deeds, and to comply with this Prophetic etiquette and morality.

On the same token, it is essential that one also conform to the refined Islamic manners in such virtues as generosity and spending in the way of Allah, which are among the most important manifestations of high morality. Otherwise, such spiritual failings as leaving others under obligation or causing them injury when trying to do good, or acting in a conceited man-

15. As a matter of fact, failing to perceive the wisdom behind the Prophet's practice and sufficing solely with the outward, manifest meaning of events, the Zahiriyya school of law has ruled that the consumption of camel meat nullifies the ritual ablution.

ner, causes these virtues to go to waste, and one to thus forfeit the rewards for these good works. It is for this reason that our forefathers, the Ottomans, displayed immensurable sensitivity in relation to avoiding moral pitfalls in the good works and charity they undertook.

For instance, in way of preserving their human dignity, they referred to the mentally ill as the “**respected helpless**” (muhterem acizler), and extended the hand of mercy to patients with leprosy who were excluded from society, preparing for them lodgings they referred to as the “**Sufi lodge for the destitute**” (miskinler tekkesi).

They also established charitable foundations to protect the honour and dignity of elderly and forlorn women whose sense of self-respect and modesty prevented them from asking of others. These elderly women were given the opportunity to earn their own living, being provided with combed wool which they would then spin into yarn, which was then bought back from them at a high price.

Moreover, in order to ensure that the donor and the receiver of charity remained anonymous to each other, they set up “**charity stones**”.

The food to be distributed to the needy was distributed under the cover of darkness, in closed vessels, to preserve their dignity from injury.

**As a further example, Bezmialem Valide Sultan** established a foundation that compensated for the harm caused by servants who worked for harsh masters, to prevent their being rebuked for the (expensive or precious) items they broke or damaged while in service, and for the protection of their dignity.

Allah, glorified and exalted be He, is displeased with His servants being treated with contempt and their hearts being broken, since hearts are the loci of divine manifestations. The Ottomans comprehended this very well. The kindness, grace and sensitivity that they exhibited when putting the Islamic morality into practice serves as a perfect example to be emulated.

Allah Almighty commands that we lead our entire lives within the sphere of noble Islamic morality, with a feeling heart, and as befits our human dignity. This is because He has honoured the human being with moral virtues that have not been given to other creatures.

What a bitter loss to human honour and tragic frenzy of wastefulness is that a human being squanders away this virtue and reduces himself to the level of other creatures, ultimately becoming even more misguided than them!

**May our Lord preserve us from all those forms of wickedness and wastefulness that cause us to forfeit our Hereafter. May He allow us to receive from the blessings of the following prayers of the**

Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings: “*O Allah, as You have beautified my external features, beautify my character.*”

“*O Allah, enable me to attain the most beautiful of character for surely it is only You Who can allow me to reach it.*”<sup>16</sup>

Amin.



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16. Ibn Hajar, *Fath al-Bari*, X, 456.







# *Wastefulness*

## in Contemplation

True contemplation begins at the point where the intellect meets the heart, both of which are inspired by Quran.

The friends of Allah gaze upon the Divine works of art in the universe as if they are gazing into a deep well. From here they advance to the realms of spirituality. Words fail to express the state of a heart that hears and sees. Those who observe the universe with such sensitivity of heart attain the pleasure of beholding the Divine art that our Lord displays in the boundless wonders of the world.





## WASTEFULNESS in Contemplation

Allah, the Most High, has bestowed upon human beings such faculties as intellect, reason and contemplation, and has made them superior to the rest of creation. He has addressed all the examples and parables in the Qur'an to those who are endowed with reason. He wants His servants to be in a constant state of contemplation, to look upon all beings with an eye of wisdom, and to take warning.

For this reason, He repeatedly invites them to contemplation and reflection through such Qur'anic verses as, "**Do they not reason and understand?**", "**Do they not reflect?**", "**Do they not reflect and be mindful?**", "**That you may understand**", and "**Will you not, then, reflect and take heed?**"

Signifying the intellect, which finds its true value in the context of Divine revelation, the Qur'an makes the address, *yā ulīl al-bāb*, "**O people of discernment!**" sixteen times. Hence, those who want to live a life befitting human dignity are obliged to enter the

realm of contemplation illuminated by the Qur'an using their reason.

Were it not for the contemplative methods that Islam presents to humanity, we would have been incapable of both perception and expression of many truths. Moreover, we would have misused the bounty of contemplation by making it merely an instrument for our own worldly interests.

In this regard, We need the guidance of the Qur'an and the Sunna, because these are the only guides which offer the proper direction to a person's contemplation and present to them the principles of living upon the straight path.

Contemplation is one of the most important acts of worship. The ability to grasp the wisdom and mystery of the universe is necessary for an acceptable servanthood, and for this, one needs to deepen his inner world through contemplation. It should be the aspiration and ideal for every believer to strive to reconcile all the thoughts preoccupying their minds, the feelings found in their hearts with the approval and good pleasure of Allah.

For Allah, the Most High, has created us to worship Him. All thoughts and behaviours contrary to this wisdom and purpose of creation make us fall into the pit of wastefulness.

Reason is one of the greatest gifts granted to human beings. However, it alone is insufficient to lead a person to the truth. The value of the human being's contemplation is contingent upon the harmonious balance of brain and heart functions. If only the brain and reason were valued, then a person may well be a good person of the world, that is, a person of self-interest. But in order to be a perfected believer, the heart, which is the centre of feeling and emotion, needs to be disciplined through spiritual training, and serve as a guide for the mind. This is because the heart directs contemplation, and contemplation directs the will.

This means that the chief cause of all voluntary actions is the heart and the feelings that take root therein. In this regard, when compared to the other bodily organs and faculties, it is more important that it be situated within the system of Divine commandments.

The intellect of a person whose heart and inner world has been enlightened by the light of the Qur'an and the Sunna becomes acquainted with Divine truths and realities. The mind and heart have been created with a disposition that leads the person to goodness and truth, provided that they make the most of the Divine resources. For this reason, true contemplation begins at the point where an intellect meets with a spiritually refined heart.

Attempting to contemplate those matters that are beyond the mind's grasp constitutes another instance of misuse of contemplation. It is essential for a believer to grow spiritually on the manifestations of the Divine names and attributes, the facets of the Qur'an, as well as the universe and the human being's own nature. But venturing to reflect upon matters that are beyond human comprehension, such as the Divine Essence or Being and the mysteries and wisdom of Divine Destiny, is a kind of mental wastefulness. Such an undertaking has been expressly forbidden by the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

Just as the eye has a certain range of vision and the ear a range of hearing, the mind too has a certain capacity for comprehension. It is for this reason that it is in need of the guidance of Divine revelation. Just as the failure to reflect upon the Divine truths is a cause of disaster, the mind's ignorance of its own limits and its delving into matters that are beyond its comprehension leads a person to mental wastefulness and to eventual ruin in the Hereafter.

The contemplation of an intellect on the basis of carnal desires, under the assault of such diseases of the heart as pride and arrogance, and deprived of the guidance of a sound heart, diverts it from its actual course and leads a person to Satan-like depravity and deviation.

**Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi says:**

*“Had Satan possessed as much love as intellect, he would not have fallen into his current predicament.”*

Hence, reason does not hold value on its own. It needs to be guided by spiritual feelings. Provided the feeling in the heart is invested with an inwardness through spiritual training, the intellect can be steered and given direction.

Bringing one's feelings under control is very difficult. But it is also imperative that we strive to harmonise our feelings with the pleasure and approval of Allah. This is achieved in the atmosphere of the Qur'an and the Prophetic Practice. Upon the horizons expanded with such contemplation, and out of the grace and favouring of Allah, our feelings, like our thoughts, will bring us Allah Almighty's happiness with us.

The heart is also the centre of belief in God. This is because belief is an exalted feeling, a lofty emotion. Indeed, belief is affirmation not with the mind, but with the heart. The Divine secrets in the universe can only be discovered by means of an intellect connected to a believing heart.

It is for this reason that the most important and most sensitive issue of religion is the matter of belief. One has to have a strong belief without the influence

of the carnal self. Belief in God and His powers never accepts compromise, that is, a worldly indulgence, because no matter how small a crack there may be in glass, in time that crack grows, and the glass eventually breaks. One needs to be constantly vigilant so as to avoid blemish in one's inner world, or to prevent such a crack from forming.

Due reverence in worship increases its reward, while heedlessness diminishes it. When contemplation lapses into carnality and causes a fracture in the heart, belief is jeopardised. Heedlessness in belief – God forbid – leads a person astray.

**Qarun** is one of the countless cases in point. While Qarun was once a righteous man, Allah Almighty bestowed upon him a great fortune. But this corrupted him and lead him astray and, deluded by his carnal soul, he claimed that he has acquired this wealth through his own acumen. Going even further, he became one of the most vocal opponents of **Prophet Moses**, upon him be peace. So, Allah Almighty caused him to be swallowed by the earth, along with his wealth and treasures.

His tragic end is described in a Qur'anic verse in the following manner:

**“Thus We made the earth to swallow up him and his abode; so he had not (the least little) party to help him against Allah, nor could he defend himself.”** (Qasas, 28:81)

The heart's digression from the sphere of Islam is like a person who when cutting bread, lets the knife slip in a moment of distraction and cuts themselves. The slip of the knife is momentary. Emotions develop just as suddenly. The freest organ in the body is the heart, the centre of feeling and emotion. Its leanings can change at any moment. The heart is between the two fingers of the All-Merciful. Just as it contains manifestations of the Divine Name Al-Hadi (the All-Guiding), it also manifests the Divine Name Al-Mudill (the All-Abasing). It is not known when one of these will prevail over the other.

Another example is **Bal'am bin Ba'ura'**, whose admonitory story is also related in the Qur'an. Indeed, it was a momentary inclination of his carnal soul that destroyed him. He also was once one of the righteous servants of Allah. He displayed many saintly wonders and his prayers were accepted. However, his momentary inclination to his lusts and fancies, by handing over the reins of the mind to his carnal soul, led to his ultimate ruin and destruction.

His situation is described in the Qur'an as follows:

**"And tell them the story of him whom We made well-informed of Our signs and Revelations, but he withdraws himself from them, so the Shaitan overtakes him, so he is of those who go astray. If We had willed, We could indeed have lifted him through**



those signs and Revelations, but he clung to the earth and followed his desires. So, his likeness is that of a dog: if you move to drive it away, it pants with its tongue lolling out, or if you leave it, it pants with its tongue lolling out. Such is the likeness of those who deny Our signs and Revelations. So tell them this narrative so that they may reflect.” (Araf, 7:175-176)

As mentioned above, attempting to use the intellect independent of Divine revelation and in line with carnal whims and desires turns a person into a fool and subjects them to the confounding exemplified in the abovementioned verse. For this reason, the Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings, says in his prayers:

“*O Allah, do not abandon me to myself, even for the blink of an eye.*”<sup>17</sup> This is the exemplary attitude that he presents to the believers.

So, for the preservation of our belief, we have to direct our contemplation through training our emotions by maintaining a constant balance between fear and hope. In order to be able to die with belief, we must be vigilant of protecting our hearts throughout our lives.

Allah, the Most High, declares in a Qur’anic verse:  
“**O you who believe! Fear Allah as He should be**

**feared, with all the reverence that is due to Him, and do not die unless you are Muslims.”** (Al-i Imran, 3:102)

For instance, if feelings of love and enmity are not for Allah, if love is felt for that which needs to be detested, and enmity felt for what needs to be loved, this spells spiritual disaster. It is imperative that love be shown to that which is worthy and enmity to that which deserves it. Love for the righteous engenders happiness. It is declared in another Qur’anic verse:

**“O you who believe! Fear Allah and be with those who are truthful.”** (Tawba, 9:119)

By the same token, affection for the enemies of Islam brings with it disaster. In a similar vein, another Qur’anic verse states:

**“And when you see those who enter into false discourses about Our communications, withdraw from them until they enter into some other discourse, and if the Shaitan causes you to forget, then do not sit after recollection with the unjust people.”**

(al-An'am, 6:68)

So, in order for our contemplation to be founded on an acceptable basis, it is essential that our feelings are disciplined through nourishment from the Islamic sources.

It is declared in another verse:

**“Surely We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to be unfaithful to it and feared from it, and man has turned unfaithful to it; surely he is unjust, ignorant;”** (al-Ahzab, 33:72)

Since human beings cannot properly comprehend the weight of the Divine Trust that they have borne, they have been described in this verse of the Qur'an as *zalūm* (wrongdoing, unjust) and *jahūl* (ignorant). At the same time, by making clear the weight of this Trust, this is a wake-up call for human beings.

**In order to get rid of these two** qualities we need to do righteous action, and transform our outer and inner knowledge, through contemplation, into wisdom.

Indeed, our Lord informs us that in the chapter al-'Asr that for the human being to be secure against eternal loss, they need to perform deeds of righteousness and undertake acts of worship that are more of a social nature, such as exhorting others to truth and to steadfast patience. By virtue of the compendious and profound truths it encompasses, **Imam Shaf'i**, may Allah have mercy on him, says of this particular Qur'anic chapter:

*“If the people were to give due consideration to and reflection upon this Qur'anic chapter, this would be sufficient for them.”* (Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Al-'Asr)

Allah presents us with a boundless horizon of contemplation in the Qur'an. One of the verses within this context states:

**“Those who remember Allah standing and sitting and lying on their sides and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! Thou hast not created this in vain! Glory be to Thee; save us then from the chastisement of the fire!”** (Al-i Imran, 3:191)

The manifestations of Divine Power concerning space – like the earth and the heavens – and concerning time – such as day and night – incessantly invite people of discernment to attain nearness to Allah Almighty. Allah wants His servants to be acquainted with the special language of the universe. For all creation speaks with the human being, whose heart yearns for heavenly exultation. Everything, from the particle to the heavenly body, reminds the human being of the majesty of their Lord.

The manifestations of Divine Majesty in the universe carry the servant to contemplation and to an awareness of humility and their nothingness. The maturity of a believer is dependent on perceiving their weakness and helplessness, as well as their place before their Lord. A person must be able to habitually concede their nothingness and weakness before their Lord, that they may fend off such diseases as arrogance and self-conceit.

In this regard, the **Messenger of Allah**, upon him be peace and blessings, often entreated and sought forgiveness from Allah as follows:

*“O Allah, we have not been able to know You as Your knowledge requires...”* (Munawi, II, 520)

The ego of a person who has not experienced weakness and helplessness in life makes them much worse than an unbridled beast, the likes of the Pharaoh, Nimrod, Qarun, and Haman. Such people enjoy committing crimes against the society as if they are listening to a beautiful music.

On the other hand, if one can learn from the afflictions, diseases and calamities besetting them, these may in reality be good for them. This is because these tribulations carry them to a deeper sense of helplessness, nothingness, humility and submission. Deep in their hearts they say O my Lord help me!

Similarly, people mature spiritually in proportion to the suffering they endure and the obstacles they overcome. On the basis of this wisdom, Allah Almighty has subjected His Messengers and righteous servants to hardship in accordance with their degree. This, for them, turned into an especial manifestation of Divine favour and became a means for the advancement of their spirituality.

*"For the people of discernment, every leaf of the tree becomes an elaborate book on experiential knowledge of Allah (or knowing Allah with the heart), while for the heedless, all trees in their entirety signify not even a single leaf."*

In order to perceive the Divine mysteries in the universe one has to have a contemplative heart. The workings of Divine Power in the universe are, so to speak, silent and speechless Divine poems. This Divine poetry have deep meanings in proportion to the spiritual sensation of the heart.

Words cannot possibly express the state of a hearing and seeing heart, and language here remains powerless. Those who gaze upon the universe with such sensitivity of heart attain the pleasure of beholding the Divine art that our Lord displays in the countless wonders of the world.

They behold, with an eye to learn lessons, the multicoloured leaves and flowers which spring from the same soil, and the blooms therefrom, the fruits with their endlessly varying colours, aromas and flavours, and the spectacular designs in the wings of a butterfly that has but a lifespan of one or two weeks. They lend an ear to the mysterious speech of all beings that is the language of their disposition. For such people, the entire universe is now like a book ready to be read.

As for the heedless in their dry and shallow inner worlds, they merely look at the shells of things and remain oblivious of the pearls of spirituality within them.

**Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi** poignantly expresses such a state:

*“Those who set their hearts on the world are like hunters hunting shadows. How can a hunter snare a shadow? A foolish hunter seized the shadow of a bird. The fowl, on tree securely perched, wondered what the stupid fool was about.”*

One of those endowed with intimate knowledge says:

*“For the knowing, this realm is a journey of wonder (for those endowed with reason, beholding the manifestations of Divine art with the heart), while for the foolish, it is lust and appetite.”*

Indeed, knowing hearts that gaze upon the universe with an eye to learn wisdom, see a different subtlety in everything. The unmindful and heedless, however, pursue the world and everything in it, saying, “You only live once, enjoy yourself as you wish, you are given this worldly pleasures only once” and thus expand the darkness and fracture in their hearts.

**Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi** calls upon us to come to our senses, to reflect upon our state, and to

think about the wisdom behind our existence in this universe:

*“Behold and learn from this human race! Why do you become blind and stupid when you see the workings of Divine power and majesty in this realm, that the desires of your flesh and interests appear to you like big mountains, and the bounty of a sound contemplation appears to you so small like an ant?”*

*“O one who has been reduced to the lowest of the low! You are as unaware of the world of contemplation as a stone is oblivious to everything around it. Forfeiting it, you have alas deprived yourself of the greatest bliss.”*

How pitiful it is for the blessing of contemplation to be reduced to carnal desires. Lack of contemplation signifies the sluggishness of the heart and is a sign of foolishness, while insensitivity of the heart causes it to become blind and deaf. The heart's blindness in the face of all these Divine manifestations is inconsistent with human dignity. The heedlessness in observing the universe mindlessly and sullenly is a spiritual disaster. Such a state is described in a Qur'anic verse as follows:

**“Have they not travelled in the land so that they should have hearts with which to understand, or ears with which to hear? For surely it is not the eyes that are blind, but blind are the hearts which are in the breasts.”** (Hajj, 22:46)

**Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi** likens the misuse of the blessing of contemplation to, *“filling a golden cup with dregs.”* This amounts to wasting the bounties of contemplation, which are more precious than gold, by subjugating them to base and ignoble desires.

Thus, contemplation must be done correctly and upon the Islamic grounds. Otherwise, such an endeavour can drag a person to ruin. The regrets in the Hereafter of those who turned a deaf ear to Divine warnings and who wasted the gift of contemplation in pursuit of their own selfish desires is depicted in the Qur'an as follows:

**“And therein they will cry aloud: O our Lord ! take us out, we will do good deeds other than those which we used to do. Did We not preserve you alive long enough, so that he who would be mindful in it should mind? And there came to you the warner; therefore taste; because for the unjust, there is no helper.”** (Fatir, 35:37)

It is, therefore, imperative to use one's intellect properly in this world in order to attain deliverance in eternal life. Our thought and feeling needs to be nourished not from satanic and carnal desires but from the Divine sources.

**Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi** draws attention to the importance of remaining on guard in this matter:

*"The satanic temptations, bad thoughts that disturb us are like invisible thorns piercing our hearts. These thorns come not (only) from one, but from thousands of people."*

This is why our heart needs to be protected from the carnal and satanic whisperings that disturb its spiritual harmony and disrupt its faculties of reflection and emotion. Just like the static of a badly tuned radio frequency, the heart faces ultimate destruction as a result of such unsound feelings and lack of awareness. As the fish live in water and land animals need air for their existence similarly the human spirit can only attain happiness in the luminous climate of the Qur'an and the Prophetic Practice.

The most important element of contemplation which frees the human being from the guile of devilish glitter and from the drunkenness of carnal pleasures is undoubtedly the reflection of death. It is declared in a verse from the Qur'an:

**"And the agony of death cometh in truth. That is what you were trying to escape."** (Qaf, 50:19)

A Prophetic Tradition states:

*"Remember often the destroyer of all pleasures."*  
(Tirmidhi, Qiyama, 26)

Refined individuals are those who are able to solve the enigma of death and the realms beyond

it, while still in this world, and who make preparations accordingly. If contemplation does not deepen in the way of solving the mystery of death, one cannot unravel the secret of the world to come. It is imperative for every person of discernment and sound judgement to be able to properly perceive this short journey between the cradle and the grave in a state of reflection and spiritual vigilance. Disentangling this knot of the future, which cannot be grasped by the human intellect, can only be achieved through holding fast to the guidance of Divine revelation. Otherwise, trying to evade death is a struggle in vain.

Allah Almighty invites us, His servants, to His Paradise. It is for this reason that He warns us against heedlessness. As stated in a Qur'anic verse:

**“Or did you think that We had created you in vain and that you shall not be returned to Us?”**  
(Mumenoon, 23:115)

As such, the **Messenger of Allah**, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, sought refuge in Allah from the thought of being enslaved to the world:

*“...O Allah, do not make this world our greatest concern, nor the limit of our knowledge...”* (Tirmidhi, Da'awat, 79)

Similarly, even in his supplication before going to sleep, the **Messenger of Allah**, upon him be peace and

blessings, calls us to contemplation, and indicates that we need to be in a constant state of praise and thanks to Allah, thinking about the plight of the needy:

*Al-ḥamdu lillāhi alladhi at`amanā  
wa saqānā wa kafānā wa āwānā fakam mimman  
lā kāfiya lahu wa lā mu'wiya.*

*“All praise is due to Allah Who gives us food and drink, Who is sufficient for us, and Who provides us with shelter and protection, for many are those who have none to protect them or give them shelter.”* (Muslim, Dhikr, 64)

Indeed, it is an important duty of servanthood for a person to reflect upon the bounties with which they have been favoured before falling asleep, and to offer due thanks to Allah Almighty for these. It is essential to remember what a great blessing, and at the same time a great responsibility it is to go to bed full while there are many people in the world who sleep hungry and thirsty, to be safe and without need when there are countless people who are exposed to threat or danger and who writhe in helplessness, and to sleep comfortably in one's own bed when many a person is deprived of safe, warm shelter at night because of the calamities they face.

Such self-accounting to be undertaken every day before going to sleep must have an indispensable place in our contemplative world. Indeed, ‘Umar ibn

*al-Khattab*, may Allah be well pleased with him, who used to say, “**Call yourselves to account before you are brought to account**,” would question himself each night, uttering such statements as, “*If a sheep dies on the shore of the Tigris I fear lest Allah ask me to account for it on the Day of Resurrection*,” and “*What have you done for Allah today, O ‘Umar?*” Such was his manner and degree of introspection and self-criticism.

How many times have we have experienced these feelings? How many nights have we been able to hold our hearts, which are wearied during the day in the way of earning a livelihood, to such questioning?

To what extent are we able to put our head in our hands and think about why we were created, from what place we have come and to what place we are headed, and the direction of our life course? Can we critically examine the degree to which we are able to fulfil the requirements of our belief and religion, display the commandments of our Lord in our lives, live in the climate and spirit of the Qur'an – the Divine message that Allah sent to us – follow in the footsteps of the **Messenger of Allah**, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, whose life constitutes a living commentary of the Qur'an, and emulate his matchless example in our actions, attitudes and behaviour? How worried are we concerning our shortcomings in these matters? Or is our most precious treasure of contemplation lost to us?

Whilst the Qur'an presents to us the examples of **Habib al-Najjar** who was stoned in way of protecting his belief, the **Companions of the Trench** (ashab al-ukhdud) who were burnt alive for their belief, and the **sorcerers** who endured the severest persecution after pronouncing their belief, to what degree are we aware of the value of the belief Allah has favoured us with?

**May Allah protect us from a life without contemplation and, as is the case with all other blessings, from the misuse and squandering of the blessing of contemplation. May He harmonise our hearts, our minds, our thoughts and feelings with His approval and good pleasure.**

Amin.







# *Wastefulness*

## in Earning a Living and Spending in the Way of Allah

At the root of the spiritual crises of our time is unlawful income, violations of the rights of others, discontentment and ambition.

Overcoming these predicaments require meticulous attention to the Islamic principles which exhort observance of the rights of others and encourage the acquisition of lawful earnings.



Considering oneself generous in comparison to the lack of generosity in broader society is nothing but empty consolation. We must measure our generosity against the generosity of the Companions.



## **WASTEFULNESS**

### **in Earning a Living and Spending in the Way of Allah**

This world in which we live for the purpose of Divine trial has been adorned with countless bounties filled with the wisdom-laden manifestations of the majesty and power of Allah Almighty. Just as these bounties can enrich one's servanthood to Allah, it can also become – in contrast – a cause of affliction and ruin as a result of a servant's heedless unawareness. It is a grave misuse to fritter away these bounties, which are each a Divine trust, contrary to the fulfilment of the aim and purpose of their existence, and in pursuit of carnal or satanic aims.

Indeed, Allah Almighty has made all that is in the heavens and on earth subservient to the human being, but has declared that human beings will most surely be questioned concerning all these on the Day of Judgement. It is expressed in a Qur'anic verse:

**“Then on that day you shall most certainly be questioned about the favours ?”** (Takathur, 102:8)



**“Assuredly ye will be tried in your property and in your selves...”** (Al-i Imran, 3:186)

**“Or did you then think that We had created you in vain and that you shall not be returned to Us?”**  
(Mumenoon, 23:115)

The most tragic waste, which implies the excess and exorbitant use of blessings, is to turn happiness in the eternal life into infinite loss and disappointment by exceeding the bounds established by Allah.

As a result of their heedlessness, human beings often tend to understand wastefulness as the immoderate consumption of material goods, thus confining the concept to a narrow conceptual framework. But just as wastefulness is material bounties has been prohibited, wastefulness in spiritual blessings has also been made unlawful. In fact, the squandering and immoderation in spiritual bounties is a greater liability and cause for eternal loss and ruin.

One of the greatest instances of material and spiritual wastefulness that can destroy one's prospect of happiness in the Hereafter is that which concerns **earning a living**, daily expenditure, and **spending in the way of Allah**.

Allah Almighty has determined the provisions of all His creation in due measure. That every living being's basic provision is guaranteed by God, is stated in the Qur'an as follows:

**“And I have not created the jinn and the men except that they should serve Me. No Sustenance do I require of them, nor do I require that they should feed Me. Surely Allah is the Bestower of sustenance, the Lord of Power, the Strong.”** (Dhariyat, 51:56-58)

**“And how many a living creature that does not carry its sustenance: Allah sustains it and yourselves; and He is the Hearing, the Knowing.”** (Ankaboot, 29:60)

**“And there is no animal in the earth but on Allah is the sustenance of it, and He knows its resting place and its depository all (things) are in a manifest book..”** (Hud, 11:6)

In these verses, Allah describes the boundlessness of His knowledge, power and mercy. Indeed, while we cannot even begin to comprehend the number of living beings in the darkness of the earth, in the hidden labyrinths of the land, and in the depths of the ocean, what a tremendous manifestation of Divine Power it is that Allah has full, all-encompassing knowledge of all these creatures, and that He has even bound Himself to supply the provisions that each living being will consume during its life time.

In this respect, while we pursue our provision, we should simultaneously contemplate the degree and depth of the closeness that our heart needs to establish with the All-Providing (Al-Razzaq), that is, with the One Who provides us with our vital provision.

Prophetic Traditions excellently express Allah Almighty being a Guarantor over His servants in the matter of provision, and provision at the same time being a manifestation of Divine Power:

*“Do not despair of provision so long as your heads are still moving, for a person’s mother bears them red with raw skin, then Allah, The All-Glorious with irresistible might, provides for them.”* (Ibn Maja, Zuhd, 14)

*“The hand of Allah is full (i.e. He is the absolute Master of all dominion) and is not decreased by His unceasing spending night and day. Do you see what He has spent since He created the heavens and the earth? It has not decreased what is in His hand.”* (Bukhari, Tawhid, 22)

From this perspective, being overly anxious about and going to extremes in order to earn provision is a selfish trap and it must be avoided. Our task, is to work to acquire the provision that Allah has determined for us through lawful ways **and in fulfilling the necessary causes**. After our endeavour what comes out of The Divine decree, we must accept it as good for us and live in a state of contentment. Having undue concern about one’s provision and forgetting the All-Providing One, and deviating to unlawful ways in the ambition to earn lots of money signifies transgressing the Divinely-established bounds in earning a livelihood and thus committing excess.

On the same token, one must also avoid such thoughts which lend themselves to inaction as, “Our provision has been determined anyhow, why exert ourselves?” This means merely going from one extreme to the other.

Allah, glorified be He, presents the grievous state of those taken by worldly riches who are overly ambitious and greedy in the earning of a living, and who overstep the lawful bounds doing so:

**“Woe to every slanderer, defamer, who has amassed wealth and counts it. He thinks that his wealth will make him immortal! By no means! he shall most certainly be hurled into the crushing disaster. What enables you to perceive the crushing disaster? It is God’s fire, set ablaze, Which penetrates deep into hearts. Surely it will close in upon them in extended columns.”** (Humaza, 104:2-9)

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, expresses his fear of his Community’s wastefulness and immoderation in relation to earning a livelihood in the following manner:

*“After me, I fear for you that the beauty and attraction of this world will be opened up to you (so that your hearts will be attracted to them).”* (Bukhari, Zakat, 47)

Just as a too much preoccupation which causes a person to neglect their worship to God and service to

society is not allowed, going to the other extreme of laziness and indifference to such an extent as to abandon one's family to deprivation, is also not permissible. A lawful living that does not allow one to neglect their worship and social responsibilities and which, with its balanced and unfatiguing work schedule, engenders personal and familial happiness, is far from wastefulness. This is acceptable and fruitful course of action.

On the other hand, worldly wealth must be acquired in way of attaining peace of conscience and happiness in the Hereafter, through charity and good works that begin with one's family and relatives and extend to society's needy, helpless, lonely and forlorn. Generosity and compassion must be the hallmark of the believer.

Compassion is the greatest fruit of belief. The most important manifestation of compassion is to run to the aid of the needy with all the means at one's disposal, and to offset the disadvantage of others. In other words, it is to spend Divinely-bestowed bounties on those who are deprived of them.

**Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi** expresses this aptly:

*"The life of this world is but a dream. Being wealthy in the world is like finding a treasure in a dream. In the world, worldly riches remain, being transferred from one generation to the next."*

In this regard, refusing to spend one's wealth and leaving it entirely at the disposal of the heirs who are devoid of spiritual discipline and who will spend it in bad ways, means facing a heavy liability in the Hereafter. This is not something that any reasonable person would do. As is declared in a Qur'anic verse:

**“...and (as for) those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in Allah’s way, announce to them a painful chastisement,”** (Tawba, 9:34)

The Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings, once asked his Companions:

*“Who among you considers the wealth of his heir dearer to him than his own wealth?”*

They answered, “Messenger of Allah, there is none among us who does not love his own wealth more.”

Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, then said:

*“His wealth is what he has sent ahead and the wealth of his heir is what he leaves behind.”* (Bukhari, Riqaq, 12)

**Sadi Shirazi** has the following recommendation for the use of worldly blessings:

*“In hoarding up wealth, do not strive to excel! For water when stagnant emits a bad smell. In munificence*

*and generosity labour! For water that flows, by the favour of Heaven to a mighty flood grows!"*

*The wise and intelligent bear their riches with them from this world to the next (That is, they spend it in God's way before their departure from this world). But, the miserly depart leaving their earthly treasure behind."*

**Abu Hurayra**, may Allah be well pleased with him, relates:

**A man came to the Messenger of Allah**, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and said:

'O Messenger of Allah, which voluntary almsgiving (sadaqa) has the greatest reward?'

He said:

*'That you give away in alms while you are healthy yet tight-fisted, in fear of poverty and desiring wealth. Do not put it off until death is near, and you say, "So-and-so should have this much and so-and-so this much," when it already belongs to someone else.'* (Bukhari, Zakat, 11)

**'Abd Allah ibn al-Shikhkhir**, may Allah be well pleased with him, reports:

"I came to the Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings, while he was reciting (the Qur'anic chapter At-Takaathur). (After reciting) he said:

*'The children of Adam say, "My wealth, my wealth." O children of Adam! Do you own of your wealth other*

*than that which you eat and consume, and which you put on and wear out, or which you give in alms (sadaqa) (to those who are entitled to it) and (thus) send forward (for yourself)?” (Muslim, Zuhd, 3-4)*

Similarly, the **Messenger of Allah**, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, states in a Prophetic Tradition:

*“Whoever among you wakes up in the morning secured in their dwelling, healthy in their body, having their provisions for the day, then it is as if the world has been given to them.” (Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 34)*

*“Happy are those who are guided to Islam, whose livelihood is sufficient and who is content (with what they are given).” (Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 35)*

*“They are successful who have accepted Islam, who have been provided with sufficient provisions and who have been made contented by Allah with what they have been given.” (Muslim, Zakat, 125)*

**Abu Umama Iyas ibn Tha’laba**, may Allah be well pleased with him, reports:

“The Companions of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, once made mention of the world in his presence. The **Messenger of Allah**, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

*"Do you not hear! Do you not hear! Wearing simple clothing is a part of faith, wearing simple clothing is a part of faith."* (Abu Dawud, Tarajjul, 2)

The case of Tha'laba ibn Hatib, who sought worldly riches in his ambition when he was once one of the righteous, is a powerful lesson for sagacious believers. Distracted by his new-found wealth, Tha'laba faced a sorrowful end because of his negligence and heedlessness of the warnings and guidance of Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

**The Messenger of Allah**, upon him be peace and blessings, states:

*"The children of Adam have no rights other than in these things: A house in which to lives; a garment to covers their nakedness; and a piece of bread and water."* (Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 30)

**The Messenger of Allah**, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, enjoins the believers to lead contented and modest lives free of wastefulness, leading by his own personal example. This state becomes manifest in his entreaties as follows:

*"O Allah, make for the family of Muhammad provisions which are but a bare subsistence."* (Bukhari, Riqaq, 17)

At the root of the spiritual crises of our time is unfair gain, violations of the rights of others, discontentment, and the drive to earn more and to consume

more. Overcoming this drive to acquire a lot of wealth, as well as the frenzy of wastefulness, requires meticulous attention to the Islamic principles which exhort observance of the rights of others and encourage the acquisition of lawful earnings. This is because the lawfulness, or otherwise, of one's earnings affects a person's worship and daily dealings, and as a result, their destiny. This is also the chief motivational factor behind the positive or negative behaviour of our children. That is to say, if we want admirable children who are protected from negative influences, we must first pay attention to the lawfulness of our earnings.

If hearts submit to the commandments of Allah and the practice of His Messenger, bodies will then become wellsprings of spiritual illumination and goodness. Bodies that become contaminated with the doubtful and prohibited become sources of vice and wickedness.

Thus, those who love the **Messenger of Allah** will have their heart set on his guidance and injunctions, will devote themselves to lawful earnings, avoiding waste and miserliness, and in treading his illuminated path, will experience the bliss of togetherness with him in the Hereafter.

On the other hand, the needs and requirements of every age are different. These needs should be addressed in order of priority. If an act of charity is

not directed towards meeting a certain need, it too becomes a kind of waste because of a wrong judgement. One example of such waste is spending on society's secondary needs when it needs believing, honourable and pious individuals.

For instance, at a time when religious life, morality and spiritual feeling are enfeebled, the most important need is to endeavour to raise the level of religious, moral and spiritual education.

Drawing attention to the need for correct identification of those who are most in need of charity when one is to spend in the way of Allah, and for the recognition of the needy to become second nature for the believers, Allah, glorified be He, declares:

**“(Alms are) for the poor who are confined in the way of Allah-- they cannot go about in the land; the ignorant man thinks them to be rich on account of (their) abstaining (from begging); you can recognise them by their mark; they do not beg from men importunately; and whatever good thing you spend, surely Allah knows it.”** (Baqara, 2:273)

Giving more than what is necessary to a person with whom we have a personal affinity, while there are individuals who are more in need, is also an instance of wastefulness. For this reason, it is essential to spend in accordance with the needs of the poor.

**Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi**, may his secret be sanctified, says in this regard:

*"There is many a holder of good fortune whose withholding from those who are not worthy is better than their giving of alms. So, spend the wealth that Allah has bestowed upon you in accordance with His command! Unwise spending resembles a rebellious slave's distributing the king's treasures to bandits, as though in beneficence."*

Authorities of charitable institutions such as pious foundations and trusts in particular should take this point into account during the delivery of aid and should act more carefully.

One must also pay attention to the fact that an attitude that may be regarded as misuse or miserliness for one individual may not be so for another. This is because the resources at the disposal of those possessing material-spiritual blessings differ.

Therefore, the measure of **wus'a**, or 'capacity', has been placed in regard to a servant's obligations and duties towards Allah, and the Qur'an states:

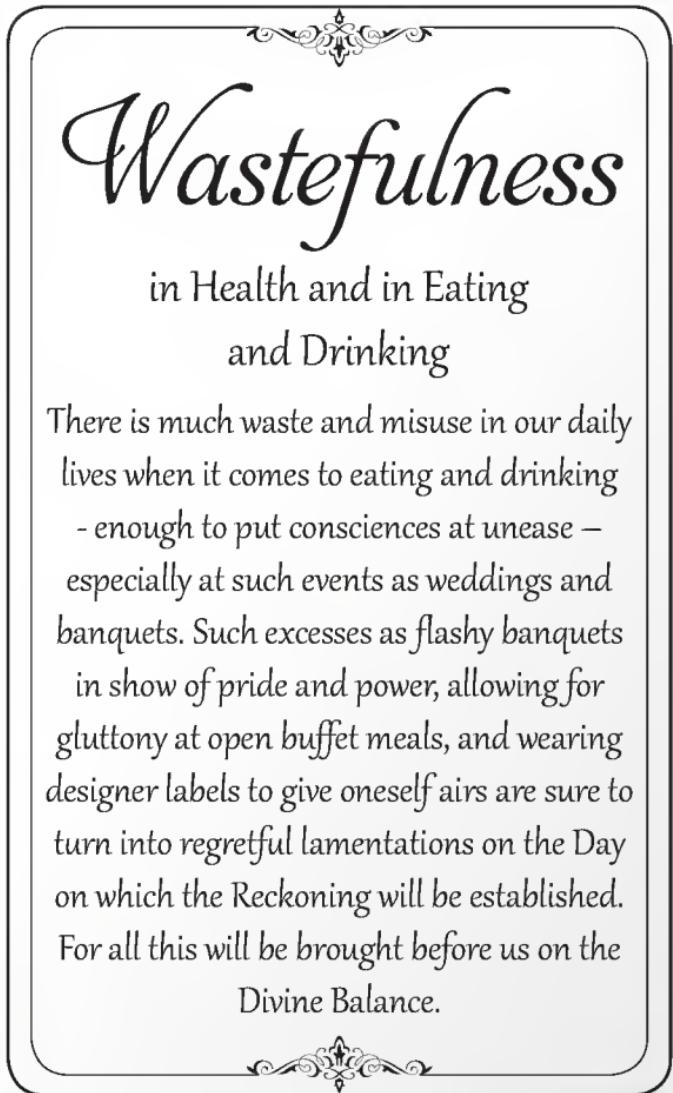
**"on no soul Allah places a burdens except within its capacity..."** (Baqara, 2:286) This demonstrates that the responsibility of no two individuals are equal on the Divine Balance on the Day of Judgement.

Thus, it is a requirement of a perfected faith to try to realise the best of giving in accordance with the resources one possesses. For it is certain that great liability and obligation will be incurred in the Hereafter because of the good that one is capable of doing but fails to do.

On the other hand, regarding oneself generous in comparison to the lack of generosity in broader society is nothing but empty consolation. For this reason, we believers have to take the **Messenger of Allah**, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and his noble Companions as a measure in the matter of spending in the way of Allah also, and we should try to attain their state.

By relying on the general populace's understanding of aid and generosity and giving less than one is capable of giving, a person can even be deemed criminal and ungenerous before Allah, rather than as generous or charitable.

**May Allah Almighty enable us to refrain from the forbidden and doubtful in every matter. May He protect us from wastefulness and miserliness. May He allow us to use all the bounties He has bestowed upon us in line with His good pleasure and approval, and stand in His presence honourably, with a sound heart and clear conscience.**



# *Wastefulness*

## *in Health and in Eating and Drinking*

There is much waste and misuse in our daily lives when it comes to eating and drinking - enough to put consciences at unease – especially at such events as weddings and banquets. Such excesses as flashy banquets in show of pride and power, allowing for gluttony at open buffet meals, and wearing designer labels to give oneself airs are sure to turn into regretful lamentations on the Day on which the Reckoning will be established. For all this will be brought before us on the Divine Balance.





## WASTEFULNESS in Health and in Eating and Drinking

The blessing of health is one of the greatest Divine bounties that cannot adequately be appreciated by human beings. **The Messenger of Allah**, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, says:

*“There are two blessings in which many people suffer loss: health and leisure.”* (Bukhari, Riqaq, 1) He thus points to the general heedlessness and negligence in this regard. In doing so, he warns his Community against the ultimate regret and remorse that comes from forfeiting this great blessing.

**Ibn ‘Umar**, may Allah be well pleased with him, says:

*“In the evening, do not anticipate the morning, and in the morning do not anticipate the evening. Take from your health for your illness and from your life for your death.”* (Bukhari, Riqaq, 3)

Our body is a Divinely-bestowed trust. It too has rights over us. Leading a life of servanthood

acceptable to Allah is only possible with a constitution that is healthy, both materially and spiritually. Acts of worship can also be performed in a more peaceful manner with a healthy body. Indeed, is it at all possible to observe a peaceful prayer and fast without one's health? Many acts of worship and charity which enable a person to draw near to Allah with their heart are invariably possible with the blessing of good health. When health is impaired, the quality of one's worship and service in Allah's cause is also compromised.

Thus, we must offer thanks in the best possible way while we still can and while our health permits us to do so, and we must exert ourselves in our worship and good works.

Good health, like all other bounties, cannot be saved from wastefulness and misuse without observance of the Divine ordinances. The diminishing of one's health through various prohibitions, from the seemingly simple cigarette, is the most disastrous form of the misuse of this bounty. In addition, preserving one's health, not only in terms of nutrition but also against factors such as extreme heat and cold and traffic accidents arising from carelessness, under the guidance of reason and the Divine injunctions, is essential in preventing the waste and misuse of this blessing.

The religion of Islam has prescribed many precautionary paths, both material and spiritual, aimed at protecting our health. It enjoins moderation in eating and drinking, and commands (indeed first introducing) quarantine to limit the spread of infectious diseases. By means of these and similar orders and exhortations, it has established the basic principles of preventive medicine.

In addition to the physical measures in this regard, it has also urged that we adopt such spiritual measures as giving charity and spending in the cause of Allah, that we may be secure against calamities and affliction. In the same vein, the **Messenger of Allah**, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, indicates the spiritual measures in the way of health preservation:

*“In the morning, charity is due on every joint on the body of everyone of you. Every utterance of Allah’s glorification is an act of charity, every utterance of His Praise is an act of charity, every utterance of exaltation is an act of charity, enjoining the good and actively promoting what is right is an act of charity and forbidding and trying to prevent evil is an act of charity, and two two rak’ahs of the Forenoon (Duha) Prayer is equal to all this (in reward).”* (Muslim)

Indeed, being in good health and free from affliction is a great blessing that requires thankfulness and gratitude to Allah. Just as this thanks can be

expressed materially through acts of charity, it can also be realised in the spiritual sense by means of remembrance of Allah and recitation of His Names, through acts of worship, and via all kinds of good works that are in and of themselves considered forms of charity, which are undertaken for the sake of earning the good pleasure and approval of Allah.

The Prophet's Companions,<sup>18</sup> who are on account of their virtues offered to us as an exemplary generation, exerted themselves to the utmost in the way of Allah, in the consciousness of using the Divinely bestowed bounties as capital for the Hereafter. And Allah Almighty made fruitful these earnest and devoted endeavours. Excessive consumption, gluttony, pomp and luxury, one of the gravest diseases of our time, was a way of life that was unknown to the generation of the Companions. For they led their lives in the consciousness of the reality of death and the ultimate destination.

On the other hand, it is certain that the body, which has been entrusted to us for a certain period of time, will suffer various ailments and illnesses if it is not given an adequate amount of sustenance, whether from miserliness or necessity or circumstance. Overfilling it will lead to the same outcome. Just as such a predicament can be in the form of over-

consumption of the lawful, it can also take the form of unlawful food or drink, which can cause the impairment of spiritual health as well as physical wellbeing.

A person's sensitivities in regard to eating and drinking changes in proportion to their spiritual level. For instance, according to the principles of Islamic Law (*shari'a*), eating after one has had their fill is an instance of wastefulness. According to the principles of the spiritual path (*tariqa*), eating to one's fill is wastefulness. In ultimate truth (*haqiqah*), eating to a bare minimum in heedlessness of being in Allah presence amounts to wastefulness. At the level of intimate knowledge (*mā'rifa*), however, eating without reflecting upon the Divine manifestations exhibited in the bounties bestowed by Allah is an instance of wastefulness.

**The following conversation taking place between Al-Khidr**, upon him be peace, during his visit to friend of Allah 'Abd al-Khalīq Gujduwani, may his secret be sanctified, are powerful in point of revealing the pinnacle of spiritual sensitivity in eating and drinking:

Al-Khidr, upon him be peace, does not eat the food that Gujduwani offers him, instead pulling away from the table. The host says in astonishment:

“This food is lawful. Why do you not eat of it?”

Al-Khidr, upon him be peace and blessings, replies:

“Indeed, it is lawful, but it has been prepared in anger and heedlessness.”

As can clearly be seen, in addition to a certain food's being lawful or not, even the spiritual state in which it is prepared affects a person's inner condition, their behaviour and their worship, in turn revealing the importance of adopting the correct attitude towards food.

Unfortunately, in our day, the harmful effects on our spiritual constitution of the food which is sold out in the open, with its tantalising appearance and aroma tormenting those who cannot have it, coupled with the unknown nature of its cooking and preparation, is not usually considered. However, the 'fate' of the food we consume, that is, the spiritual quality and circumstance of its acquisition, have a direct influence on our feeling and sensibility.

The lawful morsel holds a crucial place in the purification of the heart. **Abd al-Qadir Jilani**, may his secret be sanctified, says:

*“Consuming the unlawful kills the heart, while consuming the lawful revives it. There is the morsel which busies you with the world, as well as the morsel which*

*busies you with the Hereafter. And then there is also the morsel which endears you to the Most High.”*

**Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi**, may Allah sanctify his secret, says:

*“Last night, a few doubtful morsels (of food) entered my stomach and blocked the path of inspiration.”* This illustrates that we need to pay at least as much attention to the spiritual quality of food that we consume as we do to its physical quality.

Again, **Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi** says:

*“Do not overfeed your body, for it will eventually be sacrificed to the earth. Look to nourishing your heart. For it is that which will be honoured and exalted.*

*“Reduce the sweets and delicacies with which you feed your body. For one who nourishes the body excessively falls prey to carnal desires and faces eventual disgrace and ruin.”*

Adopting an attitude of profligacy in a matter of such sensitivity is of course incompatible with the character of a believer.

The Salaf al-Salih, the pious Muslims of the first generation, used to say, “Allah, the Most High, has gathered (the entire body of) medical knowledge in half a verse: “...eat and drink and be not extravagant; surely He does not love the extravagant” (Araf, 7:31)

In so doing, they drew attention to the importance of avoiding wastefulness in eating and drinking for a healthy life, both materially and spiritually.<sup>19</sup>

The Prophetic Tradition, “*Eat and drink, dress and give in charity without extravagance and without arrogance*,” (Bukhari, Libas, 1) puts forth the lawful bounds (of necessity) for human beings.

It is stated in another Tradition:

“*It is extravagance to eat whatever you desire.*” (Ibn Maja, At’ima, 51)

Islam forbids this condition, which is generally referred to as gluttony. Such a condition also demonstrates that the possession of means does not legitimise excessive consumption.

indeed, when ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be well pleased with him, saw Jabir ibn ‘Abd Allah, may Allah be well pleased with him, carrying some meat, he asked:

“What is this?”

Jabir, may Allah be well pleased with him, replied:

“O Commander of the Believers, we desired meat and I bought some meat for a dirham.”

‘Umar, may Allah be well pleased with him, then said:

“Do you buy everything your heart desires? Have you no fear of (being those mentioned in) the verse, ‘...You did away with your good things in your life of the world and you enjoyed them for a while, so today you shall be rewarded with the punishment of abasement because you were unjustly proud in the land and because you transgressed. (Ahkaf, 46:20)’ (Ibn Hanbal, Zuhd, p. 124)

**How beautifully the Messenger of Allah**, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, has epitomised the necessary measure in eating and drinking and its critical effect on one’s health:

*“The Children of Adam cannot fill a vessel that is worse than their stomach. It is sufficient for them to eat what will straighten their back. If this is not possible, then let them fill one third with food, one third with drink and one third with air.”* (Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 47)

The following incident vividly illustrates the blessing inherent in observance of these Prophetic principles:

The Patriarch of Alexandria, al-Muqawqis, once sent many gifts to **Allah’s Messenger**, accompanied by a physician. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, addressed the physician saying:

*“You may return to your people, for we are a people who do not eat unless we are hungry, and when we do eat we do not eat to our fill.”* (Halabi, *Insan al-'Uyun*, III, 299)

These Prophetic statements contain the prescription for the many diseases brought on by excessive consumption and the frenzy of wastefulness in our day.

**‘Umar**, may Allah be well pleased with him, makes the following recommendation in this regard:

*“Refrain from filling your stomach with food and drink, for this harms the body, causes disease and makes a person lazy in their prayer. Observe moderation in eating and drinking for this is closer to righteousness and further from wastefulness.”* (‘Ali al-Muttaqi, *Kanz*, XV, 433/41713)

French traveller **Jean de Thévenot** explains in his Travels published in Paris in 1665 how the hygiene, simplicity, and moderation in eating and drinking of the Turks, the standard-bearer of Islam for centuries, engendered a healthy society:

“The Turks are long lived, little subject to diseases, dangerous diseases are not known amongst them like the kidney stone, and many more. I believe this great healthiness results partly from their frequent bathing and partly from their temperance in eating and drinking; for they eat moderately and feed not upon so many different things as Christians do.”<sup>20</sup>

According to one maxim, “One ought to not live to eat, but eat to live.” At the same time, this principle is an expression of an essential attribute of the believers. The following incident illustrating the Islamic moral standard in this matter is of particular note:

The **Messenger of Allah**, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, once received a guest who was not Muslim. Allah’s Messenger commanded that a goat be milked for him. It was milked, and the visitor drank its milk. Then the second one was milked, and he drank its milk, and then the other one was milked and he drank its milk, until he drank the milk of seven goats. The guest embraced Islam the following morning. Allah’s Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, again instructed that a goat be milked for him and the visitor drank its milk and then another was milked but he did not finish it, whereupon Allah’s Messenger said:

*“The believer drinks in one intestine while the unbeliever drinks in seven.”* (Muslim, Ashriba, 186)

Allah Almighty wants His servants to exercise restraint in eating and drinking and to avoid the unbelievers’ manner of eating, admonishing us in the following words:

**“... and those who disbelieve enjoy themselves and eat as the beasts eat, and the fire is their abode.”**

(Muhammad, 47:12)

All acts that remove the blessing from food are included in the sphere of wastefulness. It is ingratitude and wastefulness to start eating without washing one's hands and without mention of Allah's name, and to get up from the table without praise and thanks to Allah, the Bestower of all these bounties.

It is stated in the Traditions of the Messenger:

*"The food's blessing is in the washing of the hands before and after it."* (Tirmidhi, At'ima, 39)

*"If anyone spends the night with grease or fat (from food) on their hand which they have not washed away, they have only themselves to blame if some harm comes to them."* (Abu Dawud, At'ima, 53)

The meticulousness that the Ottomans showed in the matter of washing the hands before and after a meal is truly worthy of commendation. Seventeenth-century British diplomat and observer of the Ottoman State **Sir Paul Rycaut**, who spent more than 15 years in the Ottoman Empire and served as private secretary to the British Ambassador at Istanbul, concedes the sensitivity of the Turks towards cleanliness in his major work as follows:

*"And washing is so usual and frequent among them both before and after meat, as hath caused a common proverb amongst them, that God hath cre-*

ated food that men may have occasion often to wash their hands.”<sup>21</sup>

This meticulous regard shown to hygiene in eating and drinking is as much a means for physical and spiritual peace and wellbeing as it is for (immaterial) blessing to be conferred upon the bounties one receives. Moreover, while food that is eaten with mention of Allah’s name at the beginning and praise and thanks to Allah at the end becomes a source of health and healing, foods that are consumed without invocation and praise of Allah cause heedlessness and heaviness. Commensurate with this wisdom, the **Messenger of Allah**, upon him be peace and blessings, has said:

*“When a person mentions the name of Allah when entering their house and when eating therein, Satan says, addressing his hosts, ‘There is no night’s lodging nor an evening meal for you here.’ But if a person enters without mentioning the name of Allah, Satan says, ‘You have found lodging for the night.’ And if they do not mention the name of Allah upon eating their meal, Satan says, ‘You have found a both a night’s lodging and an evening meal.”* (Muslim, Ashriba, 103)

**The Prophet’s wife ‘A’isha**, may Allah be well pleased with her, narrates:

21. Sir Paul Rycaut, *The History of the Present State of the Ottoman Empire*, London, J. Starkey and H. Browne, 1670, p. 158.



**The Messenger of Allah**, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was eating food with six of his Companions when a Bedouin came and ate all the food in two bites. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

*“If he had said, ‘In the Name of Allah’ (Bismillah), the food would have sufficed you (all). When any one of you wants to eat, let them say Bismillah (In the name of Allah), and if they forget to say this at the beginning, let them say, بِسْمِ اللَّهِ فِي أَوَّلِهِ وَآخِرِهِ ‘Bismillah fi awwalihi wa akhirih’ (In the Name of Allah at the beginning and at the end).”* (Ibn Maja, At'ima, 7)

One should also begin with the name of Allah when drinking water, and should praise and give thanks to Him at the end, saying, “All praise and gratitude are for Allah” (al-hamdu lillah). **The Messenger of Allah**, upon him be peace and blessings, would drink water and other beverages in three breaths and used to say in this regard:

*“Do not drink in one gulp like a camel, but in two or three (gulps), mentioning Allah’s name when you start drinking, and praising Him when you finish.”*  
(Tirmidhi, Ashriba, 13)

**Allah’s Messenger** also forbade blowing into any beverage while drinking it, whatever the reason. A man once asked him what he should do if he

saw something floating in the vessel from which one drinks, to which the Messenger of Allah, upon him be peace and blessings, replied:

*“Pour it out (removing it).”*

The man then said, “My thirst is not quenched when I drink in one breath.”

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, implying that he drinks in three breaths:

*“Then pull the cup away from your mouth (in between breaths).”* (Tirmidhi, Ashriba, 15)

Eating separately also removes the blessing and thus gives rise to wastefulness. Stating, “*There is mercy in company and torment in separation*,”<sup>22</sup> the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, has recommended eating in company also.

As Wahshi ibn Harb, may Allah be well pleased with him, reports, some Companions once said:

‘Messenger of Allah, we eat, but we are not satisfied.’

Allah’s Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, said to them:

“*Perhaps you eat separately*,” to which they replied, “Yes, [that is what] we do.”

22. Munawi, III, 470.

Allah's Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

*"Eat together and mention Allah's name and you will be blessed in it."* (Abu Dawud, At'ima, 14)

Similarly, the **Messenger of Allah**, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, says:

*"If anyone of you drops a morsel of food, they should remove any dirt that may remain on it and then eat it, and should not leave it for Satan."*

He also commands eating all of the food that is on one's plate, continuing his words, saying, *"You do not know in which part of the food the blessing lies."* (Muslim, Ashriba, 136)

There is much waste and misspending in our daily lives when it comes to eating and drinking – enough to put consciences at unease – especially at such events as weddings and banquets. So much so that keeping account of these losses is beyond human capacity. Were we to take only the waste in the consumption of bread as a measure then comparing this to the countless other instances of waste, the figures to be revealed would constitute a bellowing cataclysm.

Such excesses as flashy banquets in show of pride and power, allowing for gluttony at open buffet meals, and wearing designer labels to give oneself airs, are sure to turn into regretful lamentations on the Day on

which the Reckoning will be established. For all this will be brought before us on the Divine Balance.

Weddings and banquets are important ways of strengthening the feelings and bonds of fellowship. Unfortunately, however, just as those ceremonies conducted for show and for the fulfilment of one's egotistical ends fail to strengthen the desired feelings of fraternity, they also result in heavy loss, leading people to such destructive feelings as pride, arrogance, jealousy and envy. Such societies are far from attracting Divine mercy and blessing.

And so, what tragic loss and disappointment is the end of a life that is spent in wastefulness that Allah, glorified and exalted be He, declares, "**Surely the squanderers are the fellows of the Shaitans and the Shaitan is ever ungrateful to his Lord.**" (Isra, 17:27)

**Allah's Messenger**, upon him be peace and blessings, says:

*"The feet of the servant of Allah shall not move [on the Day of Judgement] until that servant is questioned concerning five things: their life and how they led it; their knowledge and what they did with it; their wealth and how they earned it and where they spent it; and their body and how they wore it out."* (Tirmidhi, Qiyama, 1)

Reminding us through this Tradition that we will be called to account in the Hereafter for all the boun-

ties and trusts that have been conferred upon us, the Messenger of Allah wants us to wake from heedlessness.

From this perspective, we must never forget that exceeding the bounds in eating and drinking is a wastefulness, misuse of the blessing of health is wastefulness, and frittering away one's life is wastefulness. Failing to protect the material and spiritual trusts at our disposal, and misdirecting our thought and feeling is also wastefulness. One of the greatest instances of misuse is the 'waste of human beings' in education or the character-building of a human being, whereby individuals are not raised to be the most honourable of creation but are regretfully neglected.

Indeed, it is obligatory upon parents to raise their children in the atmosphere of the Qur'an and the Prophetic Practice, to prevent the spiritual life of their offspring being squandered. At the same time, this shows the degree of our attachment to and love for the Qur'an and the Messenger of Allah. For the **Messenger of Allah**, upon him be peace and blessings, has said:

*"I leave behind me two things: the Qur'an and my example..."* (Muwatta', Qadar, 3)

For this reason, we should try to increase our familiarity with the Qur'an. In particular, we must also make serious efforts in the matter of spiritual and moral training, which has for the most part been neglected in the education of our children.

The most precious legacy that we can leave our children is the legacy of the Qur'an and the Sunna. We should strive to inculcate in them the Prophetic morality that represents wholehearted observance of the Qur'an. We should not squander their eternal future for fleeting future concerns.

If we indeed love our children, if we want to protect them from all kinds of trouble and if we want to be with them in the Hereafter, then we must necessarily raise them with belief. Allah Almighty declares precisely what kind of otherworldly felicity these endeavours are a means to in the following words:

**“And (as for) those who believe and their offspring follow them in faith, We will unite with them their offspring and We will not diminish to them aught of their work; every man is responsible for what he shall have wrought.”** (at-Tur, 52:21)

The believers who have been honoured with such Divine favour and their believing progeny will be together in the Hereafter also. This is an especial favour that Allah Almighty has granted to them, that they dwell peacefully together with their children in Paradise. The happiness and felicity of parents will in this way be complete.

Attainment of this Divine favour is contingent upon raising our children as believing generations in the climate of the Qur'an and the Prophetic Practice.

Avoiding one of the most important forms of misuse, the **waste of human beings**, by fulfilling our obligations towards our children is religiously binding upon all of us.



Assessing the entirety of human activity by taking the criteria identified for all the forms of wastefulness and misuse described thus far reveals just how far-reaching and broad in scope the concept of wastefulness really is. It is a fact that there are many manifestations of wastefulness in virtually every sphere of human activity, from extremes in showing animosity and affection, to the ostentatious displays at ceremonies and feasts. We have attempted here to offer the necessary measures in regard to a few basic subjects by way of illustration. But we must not forget that we are obligated to extend the measures and reasoning we have presented here beyond these matters to include all human activities, in order to avoid all forms of wastefulness, excess and misuse.

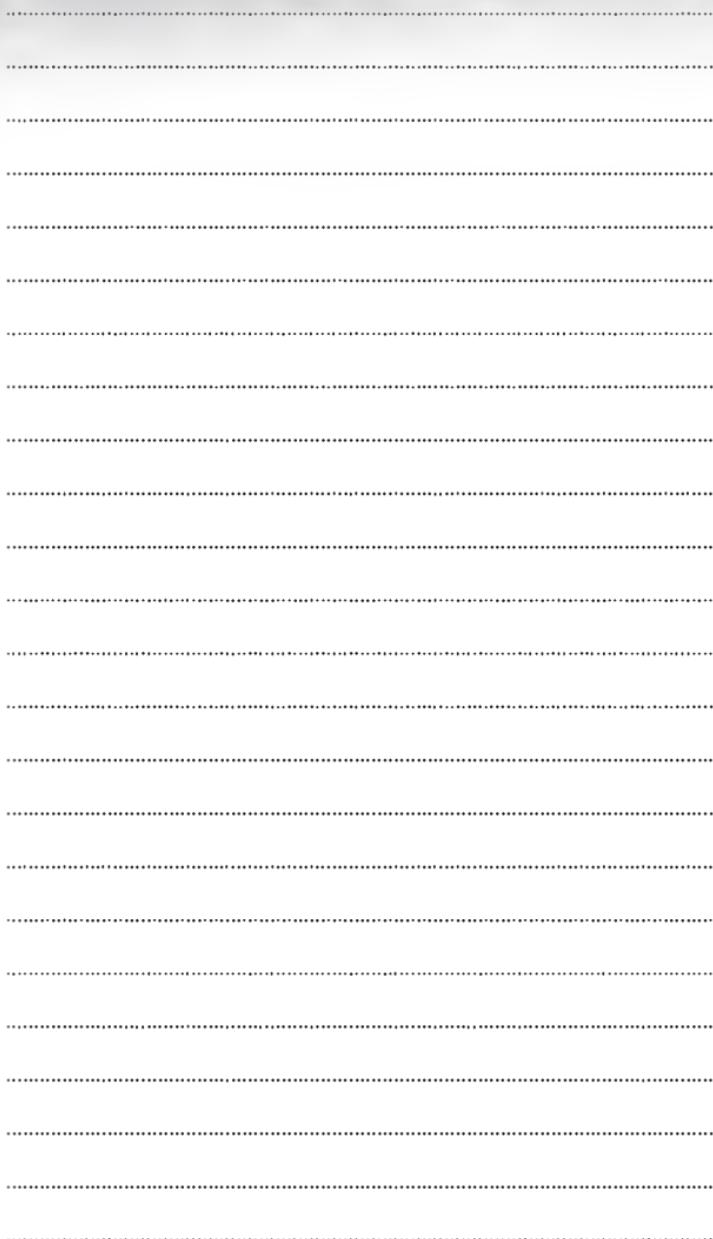
**May Allah Almighty preserve us from going to extremes in any matter and enable us to realise a life of servanthood with which He is well pleased. May He allow us to use all the bounties and blessings He has bestowed upon us through the observance of moderation and enable us to give due thanks to Him.**

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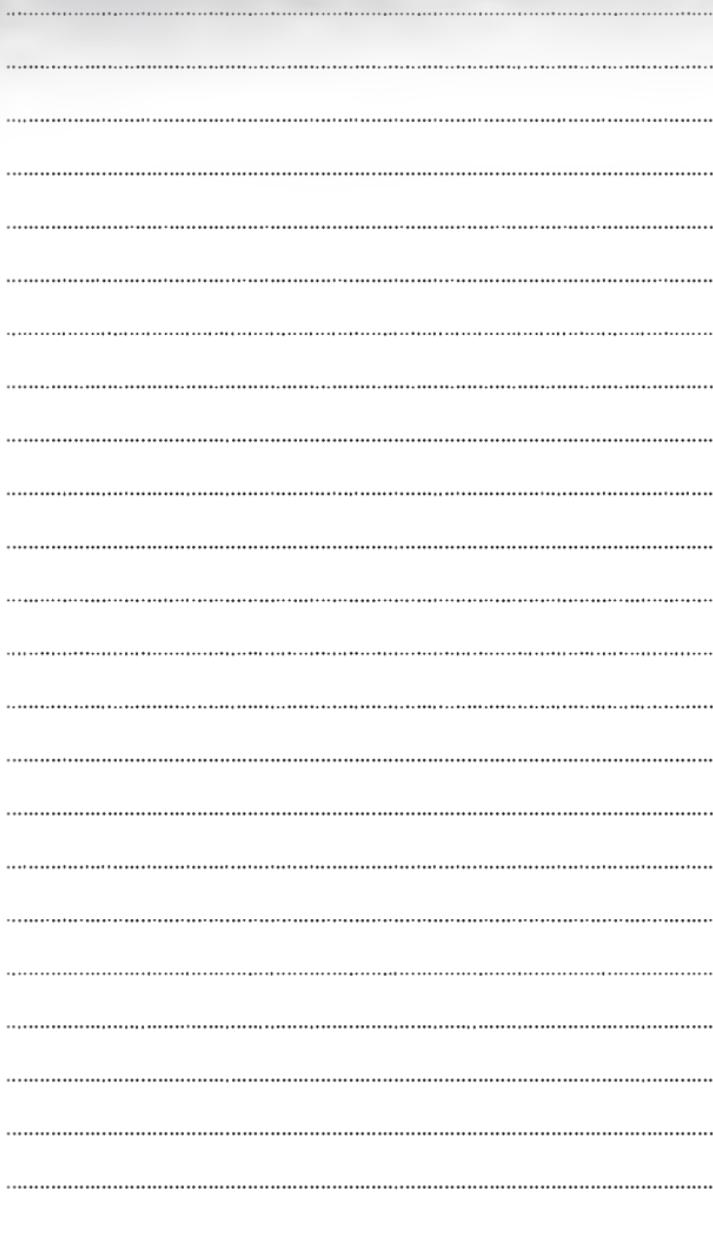






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